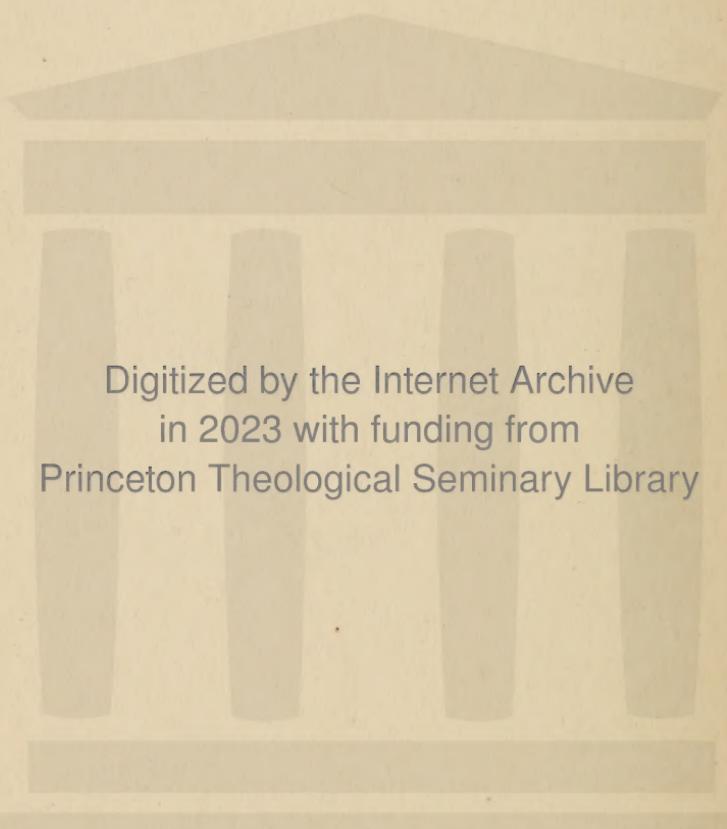
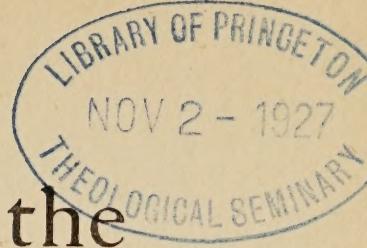


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First steps in the
philosophy of religion



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FIRST STEPS IN THE
PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION



First Steps in the Philosophy of Religion

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OF MODERN APOLOGETICS"; AND "CREEDS OR NO CREEDS?
A CRITICAL EXAMINATION OF THE BASIS OF MODERNISM"

With a Foreword by
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AUTHOR'S PREFACE

THE present work is a small attempt to respond to the widely-expressed desire that Anglo-Catholic ways of thinking should find more frequent and adequate expression in the publications of a movement which aims at studying sympathetically, and (as far as may be) appreciatively, all phases of genuinely Christian thought and practice.

It is the deliberate conviction of not a few Anglo-Catholics, that the standpoints of genuine Catholicism, and of a Protestantism which is really scriptural and evangelical, are not so discordant as is usually imagined, but that on the contrary they are to a very large extent harmonious and complementary.

Canon Quick has reminded us in his recent book that there are both *Catholic and Protestant Elements in Christianity*; and Professor Heiler in his influential work, *Der Katholizismus*, insists that St Paul, so far from being a Protestant theologian in any narrow or exclusive sense, is more properly described as “the Pioneer

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of Catholicism"; because "the Pauline Mission Programme," in respect of its doctrine, not only of the Person of Christ, but also of the Church and the Sacraments, "is the great Programme of Catholicism" (pp. 49 ff.). Even of pre-Pauline Christianity he goes so far as to declare that "already the primitive Society of Jerusalem, which is depicted in Acts, possessed in germ three fundamental elements of the Catholic institution of the Church: Dogma, Hierarchy, Sacrament."

What is especially needed at the present moment is that men of good-will in both the great sections of divided Christendom should set to work to explore the situation, with the object of discovering a "higher synthesis," in which the religious values for which Catholicism and Protestantism respectively stand may be reconciled. If this can be effected, the result will be the Reunion of Christendom on the basis of a perfected Catholicism, which will actually realize and objectify all that its august and comprehensive name denotes.

Catholicism, in the course of its long history, has exhibited two leading characteristics, which at first sight seem incongruous, but are not so in reality, viz., (1) *traditionalism* in matters of

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fundamental faith ; and (2) *continuous development* in matters of theology and practice.¹

The traditional or conservative element in Catholicism can hardly be denied to be a logical result of the belief entertained by all Catholics and most Protestants, that in and through the life and teaching of Jesus of Nazareth, God has given to the world an *objective and authoritative revelation*—a revelation which is additional to that given through man's natural reason and natural experience.

If Jesus is really the Son of God incarnate, and as such entitled to say with right, “Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words shall not pass away” (Mark xiii. 31), then it seems an obvious inference, that His authoritative teaching ought to be treated as a sacred deposit, and

¹ A somewhat sharp distinction is drawn in the Catholic system between “faith” and “theology.” There can, of course, be only one “faith,” but there may be (and in many ages actually have been) various systems of Catholic theology, characterized by varieties of emphasis, and differences of outlook, philosophic, scientific, and critical. Theology aims at systematic completeness, and in order to achieve this is compelled to admit into its structure various propositions, some of which are only *probable* deductions from articles of faith, and others to a very large extent *speculative*, being derived from philosophy and other branches of human learning, rather than from Revelation. It is a leading characteristic of “theology” to be progressive. “Faith” or “dogma,” on the other hand, is “static”—at least in principle; though of course there has been and always will be progress and development in its comprehension and practical application.

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preserved as the inviolable and necessary foundation of all genuinely Christian teaching.

On the other hand, it has been the normal tendency of Catholicism, in all but the most unenlightened ages, to give generous recognition to the complementary principle of *development and progress* in the spheres both of doctrine and of religious practice.

It stands to the credit of the Church Catholic, that it has not been unmindful, upon the whole, of the pregnant utterance of Jesus: “I have many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit, when he, the Spirit of Truth is come, he will guide you into all the truth” (John xvi. 12-13).

Early Christianity was undoubtedly an intellectual as well as a spiritual movement. Not only scholars, like the heads of the great Catechetical School of Alexandria, but even ordinary Christians were accustomed to speak proudly of their religion as “our philosophy.”

The ancient Catholic Church, convinced that in the teaching of Jesus it held the master-key to the secrets of the universe, and possessed (in principle at least) all knowledge, deliberately set itself to assimilate everything that seemed to it of value and congruous with its own principles in the culture of the Græco-Roman

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world. In particular it became, through the labours of such thinkers as Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Athanasius, and Augustine, the real legatee and heritor of the philosophic tradition of ancient Greece.

Both these characteristics of ancient Catholicism have been markedly exemplified in the history of the modern Anglo-Catholic Movement.

From 1833 to 1890 the Movement was intensely conservative, as was only natural, considering that the main task of the Tractarians was to recover and reaffirm with emphasis a religious tradition, which, although it had formed a distinctive and most important element in the English Reformation Settlement, had gradually become obscured and almost forgotten in the Erastian and Latitudinarian atmosphere of the Georgian age.

Since 1890, the year of the publication of *Lux Mundi*, the main intellectual energy of the Anglo-Catholic school has been directed to the task of assimilating new ideas, and adjusting the Catholic outlook to the modern situation. More and more it has become the tendency of Catholic writers, not simply to reproduce the wisdom of the past, but to deal courageously on modern lines with the fundamental problems of philosophy and religion. It is characteristic of the

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modern school to look facts—even unwelcome facts—in the face, and to take due account of them in reaching its conclusions. Such recent productions as Dr Gore's Trilogy, the Bampton Lectures of Dr N. P. Williams and Dr A. E. J. Rawlinson, *Essays Catholic and Critical*, edited by Dr Selwyn, and (to mention smaller works) Mr Brabant's *Faith and Truth* and Dr Relton's *Some Postulates of a Christian Philosophy*, show clearly enough that modern Anglo-Catholic thinkers are in fruitful touch with the *Zeitgeist*, and are making their own distinctive contribution to contemporary thought.

Nor is the attitude even of the rank and file of the party towards modern knowledge in any way obscurantist, or similar to that of the Fundamentalists of America. By a practically unanimous plebiscite, the English Church Union, the largest and most popular of the Anglo-Catholic organizations, has lately adopted as its second object: “To promote study and research, and the dissemination of literature, in all branches of theology and ethics; and in those departments of philosophy, psychology, and natural science, which are closely related to religion.” It now officially aspires to become “*a learned society, fundamentally interested in the study of the Faith in its relation to modern thought and modern life.*”

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The main theme of the present book is the Transcendence of God, and His absolute perfection and sufficiency *in Himself*, quite apart from the universe which He has created.

The theology and philosophy of Transcendence, though out of fashion at present among Protestant theologians in England, who prefer to stress God's Immanence, is in full accord with recent tendencies in Continental theology. Professor Vollrath of Erlangen goes so far as to declare that not only the dialectical school of Karl Barth, but *all* contemporary German theologians are united in the emphasis which they lay upon Transcendence, and in their view that a genuinely Christian theology must be "Theocentric," *i.e.*, centred in God, and not in the universe or in man.

It is hoped that this very simple treatment of a profound subject may be found suitable, not only for private study, but also for discussion by Study Circles.

CHARLES HARRIS.

COLWALL RECTORY,
MALVERN.

April 1927.

FOREWORD

BY

PROFESSOR RELTON

I GLADLY accede to my friend's request that I should write a few lines by way of a foreword to this new work of his on the Philosophy of Religion. There are few tasks of more pressing consequence for the life and thought of the Church than the effort now being made in many quarters and from widely-divergent points of view to re-interpret and to commend Christianity to the modern world. The task of Christian Apologetic has in it in these days an element of urgency, if not of crisis. We are confronted in the West, if not in the East, by a new world, eager for enlightenment upon the questions of the validity and authority of religion and its place in human development. There is a widespread suspicion that the day of revealed religion is past ; that the foundations of Christian belief have been rudely shaken ; that the future holds in store for us a new religion and possibly a new revelation ; that we are living in a transition period, when

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everything is confronted with a question mark, and certitude is no longer a possibility. What may we still believe? What may we still commend as of intrinsic worth and proved value to the rising generation?

The Student Christian Movement feels the pressure of this new outlook and the insistence of this intellectual quest somewhat acutely. Its members will turn therefore eagerly to scrutinize anything in the nature of a constructive effort in defence of Theistic belief, provided that it comes to them from capable hands, and is presented in a form which can be assimilated without violence to the presuppositions of our modern scientific approach to the problem of truth.

Readers must judge for themselves as to how far Dr Harris has been able to make out a good case for the positions he seeks to establish. There may be room for difference of opinion as to the strength or weakness of some of his arguments. There can be no doubt, however, in the mind of his readers that he is in these pages handling the vexed problems which confront all thoughtful people in no obscurantist spirit, and in no frigid dogmatic mood. He seeks to convince, not to compel belief. He states his case clearly and simply, as only a man well versed in his subject can do. It is much to be hoped therefore that

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this book may find a wide audience and form a helpful introduction to a fascinating subject. Those who will follow the author in these “first steps” in the Philosophy of Religion will be impelled to pursue the quest still further. A faith tested by reason ; a belief held in the full knowledge of the worst that can be said against it, is a precious possession in these days of advancing knowledge and discovery in every branch of human thought and activity. To be able to hold fast to the great truths of Christianity in days such as these, brings not only a great calm to our own souls, but a blessing also to many waverers, who find themselves upheld by our faith, and encouraged to pursue the quest in hope of a like reward. If this book of my friend helps to confirm the faith of some, and to encourage others to try again, and to examine for themselves afresh the problem of religious belief, it will have added one more to the many services which Dr Harris has rendered to the Church, and leave us still heavier in his debt.

H. MAURICE RELTON.

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FIRST STEPS IN THE PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION

CHAPTER I

THE LIMITS OF HUMAN KNOWLEDGE

UNTIL recent times both the friends and the enemies of religion were agreed that the faculty of reason is the supreme endowment of man ; and that it is possible by making methodical and careful use of it to attain to objective knowledge of a most comprehensive kind—knowledge which, though not complete and exhaustive, yet truly represents its object, and is reliable and trustworthy so far as it extends.

The philosophers of classical antiquity—or at least the greatest of them—held that the world is rationally ordered, and is pervaded and interpenetrated by the Divine Reason. Human Reason they considered to be either a part of this universal Reason, or at least closely akin to it. In virtue of its intimate relation to the Divine Reason, it was believed to be capable of knowing things divine as well as things human, and of acquiring reliable and objective—though of course only partial—knowledge of the infinite essence of God.

There was indeed a small number of ancient

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philosophers, of whom Pyrrho of Elis is the best known, who took up the radically sceptical position that true objective knowledge is impossible for man. Reason, they contended, yields no reliable information concerning the external world. The five senses do not exhibit things as they really are, but only as they appear to our minds to be.¹ Contradictory assertions may be made concerning the same matter of fact, which are equally true—or equally false. Even the principles of morality, which seem more certain than any others, are not really based, as they appear to be, on objective knowledge of the Moral Law, but merely upon custom and convention.

The later sceptics, however, retired from these extreme positions, and by the process of *doubting their own doubts*, attained, if not to “knowledge,” at least to a working substitute. Under the leadership of Arcesilaus, the founder of the New Academy, they were brought to the comfortable conviction that though “knowledge,” in the sense of certainty, is unattainable by man, yet “probability,” which can be attained without undue effort, is a sufficient guide for the practical affairs of life, among which they included religion. Certain of the sayings of Arcesilaus anticipate not only the substance, but almost the terms of Butler’s famous aphorism, “Probability is the guide of life.”

¹ Here we have a remarkable anticipation of a leading feature of the Kantian system.

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The general attitude of the philosophers of Greece and Rome towards Reason human and divine was regarded with favour by the early Christian Church. As soon as Christians began to philosophize about their beliefs, they identified the Founder of their religion with the all-pervading and all-sustaining “Reason” or “Logos” of God, who, having originally created the world as the agent or representative of the supreme Father, became incarnate in the person of Jesus of Nazareth for its illumination and salvation.

Seeing that, upon the Christian theory, the reason of man is created in the image of the Reason of God, and that all men and especially Christians are partakers of this Divine Reason, it seemed to the primitive Christians as natural for the human reason to know the nature of God, as to know the nature of created things. They did not, of course, believe that human knowledge of God is adequate to its infinite Object, but they did believe that within its necessary limits it is reliable. They agreed with the ancient philosophers, that the direct ascent of the soul to God by means of reason or intelligence, is not only practicable, but is even natural to man in virtue of his “rational” nature.

From the days of early Christianity until the eighteenth century, the possibility of “rational” demonstrations of God’s nature and leading attributes was seldom seriously questioned. Throughout the long conflict between Christianity and Rationalism, which occupied the greater part of

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that century, the opposing parties were agreed as to the supremacy and reliability of the faculty of reason. Butler and Berkeley were in their way quite as uncompromising “Rationalists” as their opponents. According to the former, “Reason is the only faculty we have wherewith to judge concerning anything, even Revelation itself.”¹ And the latter speaks with not less emphasis in his Preface to the *Three Dialogues*: “As it was my intention to convince . . . by reason, so it has been my endeavour strictly to observe the most rigid laws of reasoning. And, to an impartial reader, I hope it will be manifest that the sublime notion of a God, and the comfortable expectation of Immortality, do naturally arise from a close and methodical application of thought.”

The “Copernican Revolution” of Kant.

The origin of the modern tendency to depreciate reason, to limit its scope, to dispute the accuracy of its determinations, and above all to deny or doubt its power to attain to ultimate truth in the spheres of metaphysics and religion, dates as far back as 1781, the year of the publication of the first edition of Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason*. It was not, however, till considerably later, that the “critical” or negative type of philosophy represented in this work became widely known or influential. The philosophic principles which dominated the minds of the

¹ *Analogy*, Part II, 3.

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leaders of the French Revolution, which broke out almost immediately after the publication of the second edition of the *Critique* in 1787, were not those of Kantianism but of Rationalism. The Deists who followed Robespierre, and the Hébertists who enthroned the goddess of Reason in Notre Dame, were as convinced believers in the supremacy and reliability of Reason, as were their orthodox opponents.

Kant divided all existing things into two classes: (1) "noumena" or "things-in-themselves," *i.e.*, things as they exist in their own proper natures, independently of our knowledge of them; and (2) "phenomena," or "appearances," *i.e.*, things as they appear to our minds.

Kant frequently speaks as if, in cognition, the external thing itself actually does "appear" to our minds. But his true position seems to be, not that the external thing actually appears, but that it causes "sensations" in us, on the strength of which we infer its existence. The Kantian "appearances" are probably not really appearances of the thing, but only effects of its activity.

"Phenomena" or "appearances" are, in his view, the only possible objects of human knowledge. "Things-in-themselves" or "noumena" are entirely unknowable. We know of their *existence*, because they cause sensations in us, on the basis of which we form intellectual ideas of them. But whether our ideas correspond in any way to the actual nature of the things, we have no means of knowing. We are in absolute ignorance

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as to the real nature of “things-in-themselves.” God, on Kantian principles, belongs to the class of “noumena” as also does the soul, when regarded, not as a mere “appearance,” but as a reality. It follows that nothing can be known—at least by the speculative reason—either about God, or about the ultimate nature and destiny of the human soul.

The *Critique of Pure Reason* contains an elaborate refutation of all the chief arguments employed by philosophers to demonstrate the existence and attributes of God. Kant concludes that they are all fallacious, and that we must acquiesce in the view that God is not, and cannot be, an object of knowledge to the speculative intellect of man—“Speculative theology does not give us any *indication* on objective grounds, far less any convincing evidence [of the existence of a *sole, perfect, and rational First Cause*]. For we find neither in transcendental, nor in natural theology, however far reason may lead us in these, any ground to assume the existence of *one only* Being, who stands at the head of all natural causes, and on which these are entirely dependent.”

The Kantian position, however, is by no means so negative from the religious standpoint as at first sight it appears to be.

Although the speculative reason is unable to *demonstrate* the existence and attributes of God, yet there exists in man “a natural desire to venture beyond the field of experience,” and to

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win a “practical” assurance of the truth of religious and moral doctrines which cannot be demonstrated, in particular of “the freedom of the will, the immortality of the soul, and the existence of God.” Apart from these great truths, the ethical nature of man, and his practical moral life, cannot, in Kant’s opinion, be explained, or shown to have a rational basis. Accordingly it is necessary for man’s “Practical Reason” to assume them by an act of faith to be true, although “the Speculative Reason” is clearly aware that transcendent truths of this kind do not fall within the scope of possible knowledge.

With regard to the actual existence of the God of religion, who is not only supremely powerful, but also supremely good, Kant considers it to be “not indeed a demonstrated dogma, but an hypothesis, absolutely necessary to the essential ends of reason.”

In what follows we shall not confine ourselves to the actual Kantian system, but shall consider chiefly those modern sceptical tendencies, to which the negative features of Kant’s teaching have given rise.

The Modern Depreciation of Reason.

At the present time there is a widespread tendency to disparage reason; to take it for granted that Kant has demolished the “rational” arguments in favour of religion; and to acquiesce in his view that the ascent to God by means of

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reason, which pre-Kantian philosophy usually regarded as open, is in fact closed and barred.

For reasons which are not easy to understand, Kant's attempted disproof of the arguments for Theism has produced a far greater effect on philosophic opinion than Hegel's closely reasoned and not less able reply. Hegel's contention is that Kant's negative arguments are almost entirely fallacious, and that the traditional "proofs" only require a certain amount of adaptation and restatement to render them as effective as ever.

Although it seems likely that Hegel's point of view will in the end prevail, it must be admitted that at present "critical" views of the Kantian type are in the ascendant.

The modern tendency is to seek religious truth, not through reason, but through religious feelings of a warm and intimate kind, through mystic insight or contemplation, through "instinct" or "intuition," or through the direct consciousness of the divine presence which accompanies actual worship. Religious truth is sought in direct religious "experience." Intelligence or reason is disparaged as a "static" faculty, unable to adapt itself to the "mobility" and "dynamism" of actual life, whether human or divine.

Bergson, who adopts this point of view, maintains that our intellect or reason has no other important function than "to think matter." "Intelligence," he says, "is the faculty of manufacturing artificial objects, especially tools." "Our intelligence, as it leaves the hands of

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nature, has for its chief object the unorganized solid.” “Of immobility alone does the intellect form a clear idea.”¹

Bergson’s depreciation of reason, however, does not prevent him from writing elaborate books, in which he employs every kind of “rational” argument known to logicians, in order to demonstrate his thesis that reason is untrustworthy.

Bergson cannot have it both ways. If reason is untrustworthy, he is not entitled to argue. To argue is to use reason; and to argue against reason is to use reason against itself, which involves a contradiction.

Bergson’s depreciatory views of the nature of reason are shared to a considerable extent by the Pragmatists, and by adherents of the Freudian school of psychology. Limits of space, however, prevent a detailed consideration of their views.

Knowledge of Objective Realities.

The crucial question which we have to decide is whether it is possible for the human mind to know objective realities; because, unless this is possible, God cannot be known, and rational religion is impossible.

Advocates of the view that all human knowledge is purely “phenomenal” need to be reminded that, in spite of their negative theory, they do actually regard themselves as possessed

¹ *Creative Evolution*, E.T., pp. ix., 146, 162, 164.

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of a considerable amount of information about an all-important class of objective realities, viz., other human minds.

Another human mind cannot possibly be reduced to my subjective idea or thought of it. It has actual independent being, in and for itself. Whether I know it or not, it has a positive being and nature of its own; in other words it is an objective thing, not a mere "phenomenon."

It can hardly be denied that we know other minds as *objective realities*. Adherents of the "critical" philosophy write books to convince other minds of the truth of their own views, which proves that they regard them as possessing objective and independent, and not merely "phenomenal" existence. And since they expect that the same arguments which have convinced themselves will also convince other minds, they must hold those minds to possess an intellectual nature similar to their own.

The conviction of the objective existence of other personalities essentially like our own is brought home to our minds in a multitude of ways with irresistible force.

It is quite impossible to engage in an intimate conversation with another person, or to study the details of a self-revealing document, such as a personal diary or a candid autobiography, without becoming convinced, not only of the author's objective and independent existence, but also of the solidarity of his human nature with one's own in all essential particulars.

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It may be added that friends of long standing often come to know one another so well, that they possess a more penetrating insight into one another's characters than into their own.

Facts of this nature provide, if not absolute demonstration, yet practical certainty, that human knowledge is not confined to subjective "appearances," but extends (at least so far as other human minds are concerned) to objective and independent realities.

Our Knowledge of Matter.

We may go even further than this, and claim for the human mind an objective knowledge of matter.

If we ask ourselves how it is that we come to know other minds, our answer must be that we know them through our knowledge of other bodies. Seeing round us other human bodies, shaped like our own, and performing similar actions, we naturally conclude that they are animated by human minds essentially like ours. This highly probable conclusion becomes a practical certainty, when we find that we are able to interchange ideas with them by gestures, speech and writing.

Bodies, gestures, speech, and writing, are all material things, and since by knowing them we come to know other minds, it is obvious that our knowledge of matter cannot be purely "phenomenal" or subjective. If it yields (as it does)

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real objective knowledge of other minds, then it must also itself possess—at least to a considerable extent—an objectively reliable character.

It does not belong, however, to our present purpose to investigate to what precise extent our ideas of the nature of matter correspond with external reality. The arguments in favour of Theism which are discussed in this book are based much more upon the nature of the human mind than upon the nature of matter.

Transition to Theism.

In proving that the human mind is capable, by logical reasoning, of attaining to a very considerable degree of knowledge of other human minds, we have taken a most important step towards proving the existence of God. Many of the most important arguments used to prove the existence of other finite minds are the same in principle as those used to prove the existence of a supreme and infinite Mind. Accordingly we have every reason to expect that, since they have proved effective in the former case, they will also prove effective in the latter.

Among the arguments which we have already employed to prove the existence of other minds is that from effect to cause, and from cause to effect. To expand slightly what has been said, it has been argued that because my mind causes the movements of my body, therefore probably the similar movements of other bodies are caused by

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other minds, which thus are shown objectively to exist.

This argument, it will be seen, assumes that the Law of Causation is not a mere subjective law of my own mind, applicable only to "phenomena," but is a fundamental law of the universe, applicable equally to "phenomena" and "things-in-themselves."

That this is the case was probably the real and practical, as distinguished from the theoretical, opinion of Kant himself. For though he classed "cause and effect" among the twelve "Categories of the Understanding," which are applicable only to "phenomena," yet he continually spoke of "things-in-themselves" as causing sensations in our minds, which they could not do, unless they were actual causes, and the Law of Causation held good for them.

We shall assume, therefore, that the Law of Causation is universally valid, and upon the basis of this assumption shall attempt in due course to prove the existence of a First Cause.

Theory of Innate Ideas.

Kant rendered a signal service to philosophy by proving that the human mind is not a *tabula rasa*, receiving passively the impressions made upon it by surrounding objects; but that on the contrary it possesses innate "forms of sensibility" and "categories of the understanding"—*i.e.*, practically "innate ideas" which it applies to the interpretation of all objects of knowledge.

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His error lay in imagining that his proof that the mind possesses "innate ideas" (e.g., those of time, space, cause and effect, substance and attribute) amounts to a disproof of the existence of the objective realities which, according to popular belief, correspond to these ideas.

In reality the existence of an innate idea, as of an innate desire, creates a presumption rather in favour of than against the existence of an objective counterpart to it.

If we make two highly probable assumptions, which are in harmony with present-day ways of thinking both in philosophy and science, viz., (1) that the human mind is not an isolated unit, but is "organic with the universe," and (2) that the universe is a "rational whole," we shall come to the conclusion that the subjective and the objective points of view are not exclusive but complementary.

Reversing Kant's procedure, we shall draw from the fact that the ideas of space, time, cause and effect, substance and attribute, and so forth, are innate in the human mind, the highly probable conclusion that objective realities corresponding to them exist in the external world.

REMARK (see p. 9 ff.).—Kant's theory that the 'ego' or 'self,' of which we are directly aware, in self-consciousness, is not the real 'self,' but only a supposed 'phenomenal' one, seems quite indefensible. Rejecting it, we conclude that our knowledge both of our own and of other 'selves' is true knowledge of 'things-in-themselves.'

CHAPTER II

THE DESIGN ARGUMENT

THE two great problems of religion are the existence of God and His nature ; and so closely are they intertwined, that they cannot profitably be discussed apart.

Speculation on these subjects goes back to the very beginnings of human thought. There is hardly a race so uncultured as not to have devoted some degree of attention to theological problems. From the very beginning men have felt themselves in spiritual contact with the divine Power or powers in whom we live and move and have our being ; and as soon as the age of conscious reflection began (and this was very early) they asked themselves theological questions, which they attempted to answer in their myths about the gods and in legends of creation.

These primeval myths and legends, crude and incoherent and childish as they seem to us, yet contain most of the germinal principles of the developed theological and philosophical thought of civilized peoples. For example, the theories of monotheism, of polytheism, of pantheism, of creationism, and of evolution or development,

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are all to be found distinctly adumbrated in the myths of the rudest savages.

Instinctive Origin of Religion.

It may be true—it probably *is* true—that reasoned arguments were not the original source of religion. Primitive man *felt* God rather than reasoned about Him. Adoration came first, theology and religious philosophy later. Not speculation or reasoning, but awe, reverence, “creature-feeling,” and the sense of absolute dependence, which are instinctive in all races, seem to have been the primitive root out of which religion sprang.

Function of Reason in Religion.

But though religion thus had its origin in emotion, instinct, and feeling, rather than in reason, yet reason has certainly played a leading part in its purification, development and defence. It is only through reason that religion is able to give an intelligible account of itself, and so to defend itself successfully against rationalistic attacks. In every age there have been some who have been content to rest the defence of religion upon mere use and wont. Thus the heathen pontiff, Cotta, in Cicero’s Dialogue *On the Nature of the Gods*, pronounced the defence of the old Roman religion by philosophical arguments impossible, and relied entirely upon the tradition of many centuries: “I have learnt better,” he declared,

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“to worship the immortal gods in accordance with the pontifical ordinances and the usage of our forefathers . . . than from the reasonings of the Stoicks” (iii. 17). But the great majority of the ancient philosophers, including many even of the Epicureans, considered that religion is capable of defence by rational arguments ; and the Christian Church, which succeeded to their inheritance, frankly accepted the appeal to reason. Its apologists spoke of Christianity as “our philosophy” and were always prepared, when challenged, to give a reasoned defence of the faith which was in them.

The Design Argument.

By far the most popular and plausible of all the arguments for the existence of God is the Design Argument. It is ultimately based (like most other arguments which are really weighty) far more upon the nature of the human mind than upon that of the physical universe. It was as popular in ancient times as it is to-day. For example, Socrates in Xenophon’s *Memorabilia* argues forcibly from the appearances of design, which are so much in evidence in the bodies of animals, to the existence of a supreme Designer ; and in the second book of Cicero’s before-mentioned Dialogue there is an argument to the effect that the structure of the eye affords innumerable and incontrovertible evidences of design, which is worthy of a place in a modern Bridgewater Treatise.

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But it will be more convenient for our purpose to consider the argument in its modern form—that given to it by Archdeacon Paley in his famous treatise on *Natural Theology*, published in 1802.

In Paley's book a traveller over a desolate heath finds a watch, and proceeds to infer from the manifold marks of design which it presents, that it is a product, not of a fortuitous combination of its constituent materials, but of the skill of some intelligent craftsman, by whom it was designed for the express purpose of measuring and indicating time.

Paley then proceeds to argue very plausibly that there are many natural objects, the bodies of animals in particular, of which the organs are as obviously designed to perform certain particular functions as are the various parts of a watch.

The bodies of animals, he concludes, are the work of a superhuman Designer, and since plants minister to the needs of animals, and also show marks of design in their structure, it is necessary to infer a Designer for them also.

The inorganic world shows far fewer signs of definite purposive structure ; nevertheless it forms a single system with organic nature. Not only do the same general laws prevail through the whole of nature, but the inorganic part of it clearly ministers to the organic. Organisms draw all things needful for their growth and development from their inorganic environment—from the air, soil, and water, which surround them, and from

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the sun's heat, which is the ultimate source of all vital energy, at least on this planet.

Since, therefore, organic and inorganic nature are interdependent parts of a single system, we must postulate for them a single Author and Designer.

The Nature of the Human Mind.

It is evident, upon reflection, that Paley's argument is based, not so much upon the nature of the watch (though this, of course, is important), as upon the nature of the minds of the traveller and the watchmaker.

The finder of the watch knew by previous experience that there are such things as human minds, and that these are in the habit of constructing such things as *machines*. As soon, therefore, as he recognized that the watch was a machine, he referred its origin to a mind—the only thing, in his experience, capable of constructing machines. Had he not known beforehand of the existence of minds, and of their propensity for constructing machines, he could not have inferred that the complicated structure which he found on the heath was the work of a mind.

The Validity of the Design Argument.

The Design Argument depends upon the assumption that the appearances of design in nature can only be explained as the work of a designing mind.

Three other explanations, however, may be.

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and have been offered. Thus it has been maintained :

- (1) That they are due to chance ;
- (2) That they are due to what has been called “unconscious design” ;
- (3) That they are due to some unknown impersonal cause superior to mind.

I

The suggestion that they are due to chance need not be regarded very seriously. Chance might account for a few orderly combinations in an otherwise chaotic universe ; but it could not account for the billions of elaborately constructed forms of organic life with which this planet teems ; nor for the uniformity of natural law, which prevails, not only in this planet, but also, as the telescope and spectroscope testify, in the remotest depths of space.

2

“Unconscious design” is a much more plausible explanation, and one much more in harmony with present fashions in psychology, which require us to attach very great—in some cases undue—importance to the “unconscious” or “subconscious” operations of the mind.

At first sight the arguments in favour of “unconscious design” seem to be strong. It is certainly a fact that the lower animals instinctively

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seek ends, the nature of which they are incapable of understanding. We men, being endowed with reason and the power of reflection, are able to perceive quite clearly that the natural appetites and instincts of animals—*e.g.*, the desire for food, sexual desire, the parental instinct, and the instinct of self-preservation—have as their aim and object the preservation of the individual and the propagation of the race; but the animals which blindly obey these appetites and instincts have no such knowledge. Nor are even human beings always conscious of the ends to which their actions are in fact directed. Children habitually, and adults very frequently, perform instinctive actions, which have a useful end or purpose, but one of which they are not at the time conscious.

But facts of this nature do not prove the actual existence of “unconscious design.” Though the hen patiently sitting on her eggs is unconscious of the useful purpose of her action, it does not follow that there is no consciousness of it anywhere in heaven or earth. If we are convinced, after carefully considering the process of incubation and its results, that it affords satisfactory evidence of the presence of design or purpose; then we must also hold, if we are logical, that since the purpose is not in the mind of the hen, it must be either in the mind of nature (supposing nature to have a mind) or else in the mind of God. To suppose that there can be a purpose of which *no mind* is conscious, involves a contradiction.

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A purpose is simply an end proposed to itself by some mind. Apart from a mind there cannot be a purpose. Apart from a designer there cannot be a design. The expression “unconscious design” is a self-contradictory one, and in the interests of clear thinking ought to be abandoned. The alternatives which lie before us are in reality quite clearly defined. Either there is design in nature or there is not. If there is, then there is a mind which is conscious of it. To imagine a design which is not the design of some mind, is as impossible as to imagine a triangle which is not triangular but square.

3

The third explanation of the appearances of design in nature, viz., that they are effects of an unknown cause which is superior to mind, is objectionable, because it is an appeal to ignorance. If known causes are sufficient to explain what has to be explained, it is illegitimate to appeal to unknown ones. A designing mind is a *vera causa*—a known cause. The human mind itself is such a cause; and there can be no objection on grounds of principle to postulating the existence of a mind of greater power and capacity, if the facts to be explained seem to demand it. But there are extremely strong objections to assuming, without any proved necessity, the existence of causes which are not only unknown, but even unknowable. Mind is the highest kind of existence

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which we are able to conceive. If there is anything higher than mind, it is to us not only unknown, but also unknowable. Surely we are entitled to require proof of the actual existence of an unknowable of this character, before we admit it into our philosophy of religion as a principle of explanation.

We may sum up the provisional result of our discussion in the words of John Mill, who was certainly not inclined to overestimate the weight of traditional arguments : “ It must be allowed that in the present state of our knowledge the adaptations in nature afford a large balance of probability in favour of creation by intelligence.”¹

¹ *Three Essays on Religion*, p. 174.

CHAPTER III

EVOLUTION AND DESIGN

AN argument which is sound in principle never loses its value. Old philosophies may be replaced by new ones. Fresh discoveries may revolutionize the experimental sciences. New categories of thought may profoundly change the intellectual atmosphere. Nevertheless an old argument which ever really proved anything, will always be ready to prove it again. At the most it will require a few minor improvements to adapt it to the habits of thought of the age.

This principle holds good of arguments of all kinds ; but it applies conspicuously to arguments in favour of religion. Most of these arguments are old—old at least in general principle. In the hands of successive generations of apologists they have undergone certain changes to adapt them to the scientific and philosophic outlook of the day. But the more they change in outward form, the more evident it becomes that they do not change in substance. They owe their persuasiveness and persistence, partly to their intrinsic weight, but partly also to their adaptation to the mentality of the ordinary man, which is one of the most unchanging things in the world. It is because of the

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appeal which they make to ordinary minds and to ordinary ways of thinking, that the usual theistic arguments are so tenacious of life. In ages of scepticism they suffer seeming death, but a resurrection speedily follows. The dead and buried arguments reappear with a few minor improvements suggested by past controversies, and enter upon a new career of usefulness.

Early Form of the Design Argument.

When John Mill penned the words which conclude the preceding chapter, the recent eclipse of the Design Argument was only just beginning. Darwin had launched his theory of Evolution, but the scientific world had not yet accepted it. Mill could still speak of it as something "very startling," something "prima facie improbable," something concerning which "all that can now be said is that it is not so absurd as it looks."¹

The complete triumph of the Evolution theory compels us to treat it seriously, and to ask whether it really affords an alternative explanation of the apparently purposive structure of living organisms, which men of the pre-Darwinian age—even philosophers as sceptical as Mill—felt obliged to attribute to Design.

Before the age of Darwin, practically all naturalists, except Lamarck, were of opinion that the existing species of plants and animals were

¹ *O.C.*, pp. 173-174.

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instantaneously created in substantially their present forms, and that they are incapable of any fundamental change. These views are known as the theories of "Special Creation," and of the "Immutability of Species." Paley in his *Natural Theology* very properly assumed these theories to be true, because, although their truth was not essential to the validity of his argument, they were in fact accepted almost unanimously by the scientific men of his day.

Darwin rejected both these theories, and propounded the opposite view that species, so far from being created suddenly and separately, had been evolved very slowly and gradually in the course of countless ages from one or a few very simple living organisms. It was his opinion that, given a speck of living protoplasm, it was possible to explain the production therefrom of all the existing species of plants and animals, including the human species, by purely natural and unintelligent causes, of which he considered "Natural Selection" to be the chief.

Darwin did not regard his theory of Evolution as necessarily fatal to the Design Argument, the strength and persuasiveness of which in certain moods he emphatically asserted; but he did regard it as seriously weakening the scientific evidence in favour of design usually appealed to by Christian advocates.

Many of his followers went much further, and contended that Evolution excluded Design by offering a preferable explanation of the facts

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which had previously been accounted for by the theory of Design.

Time as a Cause.

The opponents of the Design Argument made out a case against it which was more plausible than strong. One of their chief controversial devices was to draw unlimited cheques upon the bank of time, and to suggest that, given enough time (and they dealt in millions of years), almost anything, however improbable, might happen.

Thus they freely admitted that if the first representatives of the existing species of plants and animals did really spring instantaneously from the earth, as Milton represents them doing in *Paradise Lost*, then no explanation short of the traditional one of creation by a designing Intelligence is adequate.

But if on the other hand, the process was gradual and prolonged, the case, they contended, is different. They regarded the ladder of Evolution as consisting of an almost infinite number of ascending steps placed in such close proximity that the successive stages might be regarded as almost melting into one another.

They assumed as an axiom that a very short upward step (not, of course, a long one) might be accounted for by purely mechanical and chemical causes. But if the first step was thus capable of a purely physical explanation, so also (they argued) was the second and third and all subsequent steps, until at last the original amœba or speck of

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protoplasm developed into Man, the Lord of the universe, without the assistance of any super-human Intelligence.

This argument evidently turns upon the causal efficacy of time, and there can be no doubt that as a general rule the efficacy of causes can be indefinitely increased by increasing the time during which they operate. For example, a pumping-engine which could not fill a reservoir in one day might fill it in a week; a scribe who could not copy a document in one hour might do so in several; a lesson which could not be learnt by a pupil in five minutes might be learnt in ten.

But in every case in which the increase of time increases the efficacy of the cause, the cause is naturally adapted to produce the effect required. An unsuitable cause will not produce the desired effect, however long it continues to act. Gravitation, however long it acts, will never produce the effect of repulsion. An unmusical person will never succeed in producing an opera like *Parsifal*, even though he devotes eternity to the task. In no case will ordinary ability or even talent, however much assisted by industry and long experience, produce a work of genius. The forces of jealousy and hatred could never, however long they operated, produce international peace and goodwill.

Body and Soul.

The initial question, therefore, which we have to consider is this: Are purely physical causes

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adequate to account for the effects which we have to explain, viz., living organisms?

An organism is not a mere machine—it is *alive*. The body of a man is animated by a rational soul, an animal by a sensitive soul, and probably even a plant by some unifying principle which may be called a vegetative soul. What we have to explain is not mere mechanism—a mechanical cause might suffice for this—but mechanism directed to a psychical end. The admirable adjustments of the eye are not directed towards any mechanical end, but have as their sole object *sight* or *vision*. Vision is not anything material. It cannot be expressed in terms of matter or motion or chemical combination. It is a fact purely spiritual or psychical. It is not the eye which sees, but the soul which sees by means of it. In man, the principal structure, the brain, is definitely the organ of thought. It has no adequate explanation or meaning apart from the mental processes which it seems to be designed to assist.

This brings us to the point which was emphasized in the last chapter, viz., that nearly all theological arguments which are really weighty turn upon the nature of the human mind or soul. What the agnostic Evolutionist has to explain by his theory is, not merely the structure of the human body, but also and much more the nature of the human mind, of which the body is merely the organ. His business is to show that the unintelligent causes to which he attributes the origin of the human mind, viz., matter and energy and chemical

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affinity, are really fit and adequate to produce it.

To attempt this is really a hopeless undertaking. The principle of causation, as understood both by science and by common sense, requires that there should be assigned to every effect, not merely a cause, but an adequate cause, *i.e.*, one at least equal to it in magnitude and excellence. It follows that no cause inferior in nature to mind can be the cause of mind. The attempts of materialists and semi-materialists to explain the intelligence of an Aristotle or a Newton as a product of purely physical forces are as unscientific as they are unphilosophical.

Evolution on this planet has followed a mainly upward direction. Progress has been the rule, degeneration the exception. It follows from this, that the process of Evolution does not contain its complete explanation within itself. Lifeless matter is not an adequate cause of plant life, nor plant life of animal life, nor animal life of the rational life of human beings. We must assume, therefore, that a supernatural Cause has been at work throughout the process, guiding the unintelligent forces of nature towards a rational end, *viz.*, the production of Man, which, apart from such guidance, they could never have reached. Assuming the existence and activity of a Designing Creator, Evolution is a process readily intelligible. But apart from this, it violates the law of causation; for every upward step is an effect which has no adequate cause. The

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materialistic theory requires us to believe that matter and physical energy are adequate causes of mind, which is absurd.

Natural Selection.

As for “Natural Selection,” though its importance is undeniable, it is impossible to regard it as the really determining cause of Evolution. To account for Evolution, we require a cause which is at once *intelligent* and *productive*. It must be *intelligent*, because it must be an adequate cause of the human intellect ; and it must be *productive*, because (as Bergson has so forcibly shown) Evolution does not merely recapitulate the past, but continually gives rise to new products possessing higher values.

Natural Selection, like all other physical processes, is blind and unintelligent. Nor does it produce anything. All that it does is to kill off such organisms as are unsuited to their environment. It is obvious that before Natural Selection can begin to operate, living organisms must first be produced. It follows that it is not Natural Selection, but the mysterious Power which produces these organisms in a continually ascending scale of values, which is the real efficient cause of the evolutionary process.

That this cause must be a Mind, because the process culminates in minds, has already been sufficiently shown.

IV

THE ARGUMENT FOR A FIRST CAUSE

THE argument for a First Cause, though considerably more subtle than the familiar Design Argument, may fairly claim a place among the popular arguments for the existence of God.

In principle it is very old indeed. Rude anticipations of it occur in the creation myths of not a few savage and barbarian peoples. Already in one of Plato's latest works, *The Laws*, it assumes something like its modern form ; and in the next generation it reaches classical expression in the *Metaphysics* of Aristotle.

The argument for a First Cause of all things has always made a strong appeal to common sense ; though it is only fair to add that even the plain man, when he comes to think the matter out to the bottom, sometimes becomes aware of its limitations and difficulties.

We have probably all heard of the mother, who having informed her child that everything must have been made by someone, and that all things were made by God, was startled by his query : “ But who made God ? ”

The child was intelligent enough to detect what is really a weak point in not a few of the

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popular versions of the Argument for a First Cause.

Cause and Effect.

Each one of us knows in a general way what is meant by "cause" and what is meant by "effect." In fact, a man's ideas on this subject are usually quite clear (or he thinks they are) until he attempts to reduce them to order, and express them in the form of a definition. His definition is almost certain to involve him in difficulties—difficulties due in part to the profundity of the subject, and partly to the fact that Causation is something quite unique, and therefore only to be described in terms of itself.

Those philosophers seem to be right who maintain that Causation is not only something objectively real in the natural world, but is also (as Kant contended long ago) an internal law or category of the human mind, which guides its thinking. Without any formal instruction in logic, the mature human mind instinctively argues from cause to effect and from effect to cause; though of course it is true that a trained logician is less liable than others to make mistakes in so doing.

Even young children show a vague and instinctive appreciation of Causation as a principle of practical action. The proverb says, "A burnt child dreads the fire." He certainly expects that the fire will burn him again, if he puts his hand

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into it. His expectation, while he is quite young, is purely instinctive ; but when he reaches the age of reflection, he learns to appreciate the principle upon which it is based, and to express it in some such formula as, "Like causes produce like effects."

Even animals act instinctively in a similar way ; but, unlike man, they never become intellectually aware of the principle involved in their action.

Have we direct experience of Causation ?

Philosophers are not entirely agreed as to whether the idea of Causation is instinctive in the human mind, or is derived from experience.

Perhaps the truth, as is so often the case, lies in a judicious combination of the two seemingly opposed views.

It certainly seems to be true that the *germinal* idea of Causation is instinctive, because it is involved in practically all rational thinking ; and the power to think rationally seems clearly to be instinctive, because it comes to every normal person, without instruction, when he reaches a certain age.

On the other hand a detailed, accurate, and critical knowledge of the Causal Principle is clearly the result of experience, or, to speak more accurately, of reasoning from experience.

For the purpose of attempting to prove the existence of God, the important question to ask is, *From what kind of experience* do we derive

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our original knowledge of the actual nature of Causation? Do we derive it from *internal* experience—from our direct knowledge of the working of our own minds; or from *external* experience—*i.e.*, from our knowledge of the operations of physical nature?

At first sight the answer seems clearly to be that we derive it from the operations of external or physical nature.

For example, a spark is dropped upon dry gunpowder and an explosion follows. Apparently we have here direct evidence that the spark is the cause of the explosion.

But upon reflection we discover that all that we directly perceive is that the spark is *followed* by the explosion, not that it *causes* it. The causal link—if such there be—uniting the two events as cause and effect is quite imperceptible to us. Our senses, even when assisted by the most delicate scientific instruments, are unable to discover the least trace of it. We conclude, therefore, that our apparently immediate knowledge that the spark caused the explosion is really only an *inference*—doubtless a well-grounded inference, but still an inference and nothing more. We may safely go even further, and assert, that unless we already possessed independent knowledge of what Causation is, we should be unable to infer its presence and operation in this particular sequence of events.

Within our own minds, however, we are able to perceive causation actually at work, and thus to gain direct knowledge of its nature.

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Let us imagine, for example, that a man makes up his mind to think out some philosophical or mathematical or practical problem, and does so successfully. In this case the cause is *his will*, and the effect is *the solution of the problem*. Here we see clearly that both the cause and the effect are mental.

Again, let us suppose that, with a view to his moral improvement, he makes up his mind to control his temper, or to take a more cheerful view of life, and does so successfully. Here also both the cause (his will) and the effects (better control of temper, and increased cheerfulness) are entirely mental.

Experience, however, further informs us that the human mind is able to produce, not only mental effects like these, but also physical or material effects. For example, a man may will to move one of his limbs, or his whole body. Moreover he is able to produce effects even on external nature, either directly by using his body, as when he picks up a stone, or indirectly by employing some instrument or tool, as when he uses an axe to cut down a tree.

Different kinds of Cause.

Consideration of this last instance makes clear the important distinction which exists between a cause which is *original* or *productive*, and a cause which is merely *instrumental*.

When a tree is cut down, the woodman's axe

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may be said to be the *cause* of its downfall. But obviously the axe is only an *instrumental*, not a primary cause. It is a cause, simply because the woodman uses it to achieve his purpose. Apart from this purpose it is not a cause at all. Regarded as so much steel and wood, it has no power—not even any tendency—to cause the tree to fall. The original or determining cause, is not the axe, nor even the motions of the woodman's body, but something entirely mental, viz., the woodman's *will*, which is firmly set upon the felling of the tree, and uses both body and axe for that purpose.

The Theistic Inference.

We are now in a position to draw a theistic inference from the facts before us. So far as human knowledge extends, a cause is always either a mind or something dependent upon a mind. If it is an original or productive cause it is always *a mind*; if it is a dependent cause it is always *an instrument made use of by some mind*.

If, therefore, Causation exists as a fact in the sphere of external nature, as both science and common sense assume that it does, we must conclude that, in so far as it is original or productive, it is a *mind*, and in so far as it is instrumental it is something *dependent upon and used by a mind*. There exists, therefore, a supreme Mind, analogous to, but infinitely greater than the human mind, which uses matter and its powers as instruments

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for achieving its rational purposes. I say "Mind" rather than "minds," because the unity of nature and the universality of natural law strongly suggests that the ultimate Cause of all causation is one rather than many. "At least," says John Mill, "if a plurality be supposed, it is necessary to assume so complete a concert of action and unity of will among them, that the difference is for most purposes immaterial between such a theory, and that of the absolute unity of the Godhead. . . . Monotheism is the only theism which can claim for itself any footing on scientific ground."¹

The other Alternative.

Of course it may be maintained (as a matter of theory and speculation) that there actually exist causes in this unfathomable universe which are neither mental nor dependent upon mind.

But it is the business of science (and of theology also, so far as it is scientific), to explain the facts of experience *by known causes*, so far as this is at all possible; and only to resort to explanation by unknown or unknowable ones, when those which are known are clearly insufficient.

It is certainly not scientific procedure to introduce (as the opponents of theism do) principles of explanation which have no basis in experience, and are perhaps not even conceivable. It is a

¹ *O.C.*, p. 133.

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highly debatable question whether the human mind is capable of conceiving (even in imagination) a cause which is neither a mind, nor anything dependent upon a mind. But however this may be, one thing is certain, that we have no direct or actual experience of any such cause or causes. The theory of a supreme Mind, on the other hand, stands on strong scientific ground. It appeals to a *known* cause namely, mind, and to an *adequate* one, because it assumes that the Mind in question is (practically) infinite. Moreover the cause is of a nature apt and fit to produce the required effect, viz., the rational order and unity of the universe. That this rational order should be the effect of Reason and Intelligence is easily credible. That it should be the effect of anything which is not Reason and Intelligence, does not seem either probable or possible—at any rate it is not capable of proof.

Absolute demonstration in a matter of this kind is not possible. But we shall be acting in accordance with the principles both of science and of common sense, if we explain the universe by a cause which is known to experience, rather than by one which is certainly unknown, and quite possibly inconceivable.

The argument here developed is the same in principle as that which underlies the theory of "Animism." As is well known, primitive and savage races mostly explain the operations of physical nature as the effects of the wills of super-human minds or intelligences. Crude in con-

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ception and false in detail as this theory is in all its primitive forms, it is nevertheless based upon correct principles of reasoning. We may even venture to regard it as *theism in germ*. As the founder of the modern English school of Anthropology, Edward Tylor, put the matter long ago in summing up his discussion of Animism: "The theory of the soul is one principal part of a system of religious philosophy which unites, in an unbroken line of mental connexion, the savage fetish-worshipper and the civilized Christian. The divisions which have separated the great religions of the world . . . are for the most part superficial in comparison with the deepest of all religious schisms, that which divides Animism from Materialism."¹

¹ *Primitive Culture*, iv, p. 501.

CHAPTER V

OBJECTIONS TO THE ARGUMENT FOR A FIRST CAUSE

THE weightiest of all the objections to the Argument for a First Cause is that implied in the child's query : " But who made God ? "

It is plausibly contended by not a few objectors, that if every effect has a cause, and if every such cause has another cause, and so on indefinitely, we can never (at any rate by way of this argument) reach an ultimate and uncaused Cause, such as we must suppose God to be. We are involved, such objectors contend, in the fallacy of an " infinite regress," *i.e.*, we go back and back indefinitely from one secondary cause to another, without any prospect of ever reaching the primary and original Cause of which we are in search.

The force of this objection largely disappears, if we draw an accurate distinction between what is meant by " cause," and what is meant by " effect."

It is involved in the very notion of an " effect," that it is produced by a " cause." But it is not in any way involved in the notion of a " cause," that it is produced by anything. The most familiar causes are, of course, those caused by other causes. But in so far as they are thus caused, they are not properly causes at all, but *effects*. A cause

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pure and simple—a cause in the most absolute sense—produces (or is able to produce) effects, but it is not itself necessarily produced by anything.

It is obvious that no ordinary causes fully realize the ideal of an “uncaused cause,” but some of them approximate to it. For example, the human soul or mind, considered in respect of its origin, is caused :—it is created by God. But considered in respect of its capacity to will freely, it is autonomous or self-determined. It is true that a man’s capacity of Free Will is bestowed upon him by God. But God does not control or interfere with its exercise. Within the limits of what is humanly possible, the soul is free to choose both its own ends, and also the means by which they are to be attained. It follows that if we trace back the chain of Causation from any external human action (*e.g.*, an act of charity to some poor person) to its source in the *flat* of the will which determined it, the chain of Causation abruptly ends. The *capacity* thus to will freely is, of course, willed or caused by God ; but *not the manner of its exercise*. In freely choosing its ends, and the means for their accomplishment, the human soul is a *self-determining cause*.

It is true that there have been and are many thinkers who deny the fact of human Free Will. Determinists deny it because it seems to them inconsistent with the Uniformity of Natural Law ; and extreme Predestinarians, because they cannot reconcile it with the Divine Omnipotence and Omniscience. To the plain man, however, the

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reality of Free Will seems to be guaranteed by the direct testimony of his consciousness, and it is very seldom that he can be driven from this position by argument. From his own point of view, he is of course clearly in the right. If Free Will really is, as he alleges, a fact of which we are directly aware, then it is obvious that it is impossible to disprove it by any amount of argument.

It is not necessary for our present purpose to determine whether Free Will is a fact, as generally supposed, or is an almost universal illusion. It suffices that every one knows what Free Will means, and that practically every one who has not been driven from his original belief by the pressure of philosophical or theological difficulties, is convinced that he possesses it.

Starting then from Free Will—or more precisely from a mind possessed of Free Will—as a fact either of real or apparent experience, we have much of the material needed for forming a general idea of what is meant by an “uncaused cause.”

The human mind, however, being created, is only partially and imperfectly an uncaused cause. In order to attain to the idea of a cause which is absolutely uncaused, we must remove the limitation of creaturehood, and think of one which is uncreated and self-existent.

Again, the human mind is a cause of merely finite efficacy, which cannot be the case with the First Cause, which *ex hypothesi* is the cause of all real and possible being. Removing, then, the limitation of finitude also, we arrive at

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the conception of an Infinite Mind, analogous to but immeasurably transcending the human mind, eternal, omnipotent, self-sufficing, uncaused, self-existing, and absolutely free in exercising its causal activity, because determined by itself alone.

To such a Cause, as was shown in the last chapter, the Argument from Causality conducts us, nor does that Argument really require us to seek for any cause or origin of this cause. We know from the Causal Principle itself that there must be at least one cause which is uncaused and eternal. Had no cause whatever existed from eternity, nothing whatever would be in existence now. *Ex nihilo nihil fit.* It is clearly impossible that nothing should produce something, and since "something"—in fact an entire universe—does now actually exist, it is necessary to postulate at least one eternal Cause to account for it.

Furthermore, we are unable even to imagine a cause capable of producing an *Infinite Mind*. In order to produce it, it must be equal or greater. That it should be greater is impossible, because the mind in question is assumed to be infinite. Nor can it be even equal, because there cannot in the nature of things be two infinites and omnipotents in the absolute sense.

We conclude, therefore, that in the *Perfect and Infinite Mind*, to which the Causal Argument conducts us, we have reached our goal. Nothing more ultimate is possible, or even imaginable. Even to ask what caused it, is absurd.

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Is the Universe Eternal?

There is still one further difficulty which is worth considering.

According to the usual view, the universe is not eternal. It was created in time, or rather at the beginning of time.

On the other hand, many philosophers, and some even among Christian theologians, hold or have held, that the universe had no beginning, but is eternal, like God.

The question then arises whether, if this be so, the universe can be regarded as being caused or created by God. Those who maintain that it cannot, usually contend that an effect must be *subsequent* to its cause, and that accordingly, if the universe had no beginning, it must be *uncaused* or *self-existent*.

But neither Christian theology nor common sense accepts the view that an effect need be subsequent to its cause. In the Trinity, for example, according to the classical Eastern theologians, the Son and the Spirit are *aitiata*, *i.e.*, "things caused" or "effects." Their "cause" (*aitios*) is the Father, from whom, as the Fountain or Root of Godhead, the former is begotten and the latter proceeds. Here we have examples of "effects" which are coeval (in this case actually *co-eternal*) with their Cause, and to this Cause they are equal in nature, dignity, and power.

It follows that there is no reason in the nature

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of things why the universe should not be both eternal, and also created or caused by God. If God willed its production from eternity, then, of course, it existed from eternity. If on the other hand He willed its production in time, then it had a temporal beginning.

The choice between these alternatives is a matter rather of philosophic than of religious interest. Both are consistent with the Christian doctrine that God is the Creator and Maker of the World.

The Contingency of the World.

It should be carefully observed that the validity of the Argument for a First Cause does not in the least depend upon the answer given to the quite different question, whether the universe had or had not a beginning in time.

What makes the majority of thinkers believe that the universe is “created” or “caused,” is not anything connected with the date of its origin (about which nothing reliable is known), but simply and solely the fact that the mode of its existence is obviously *contingent* and *dependent*.

The world indeed exists as a fact—perhaps it has always done so—but *certainly not as a necessary fact*. Although the existence of the universe has been a fact of experience ever since the race of men appeared upon the earth, yet we can easily imagine it to be annihilated, and its place taken, either by nothing at all, or by another universe of a different kind.

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We cannot, however, imagine the non-existence of anything which exists *necessarily*. We cannot, for example, imagine the laws of thought, or of mathematics, or the fundamental laws of morality, as either coming into being or ceasing to be.

Undoubtedly we can imagine many universes very different from this one. But we cannot imagine a universe in which two plus two would equal five, or two contradictory statements would both be true, or a whole would be less than its part, or justice and benevolence would be vices and injustice and cruelty virtues.

All really necessary truths have eternal and immutable being. They are true in all times and places—true not only in this, but in all possible universes.

Eternal Truths presuppose an Eternal Mind.

The existence of eternal and necessary truths, which is a fact of direct experience which can hardly be denied, affords an additional and most cogent argument in favour of the conclusion (already shown to be probable on other grounds) that the supreme Cause of all things is a Mind or Intelligence.

A truth is not a material, but an immaterial thing. It has no meaning for, and cannot exist for, a rock or a plant—perhaps not even for an elephant or an ape. It exists and has meaning for man, because he possesses intelligence, and only for that reason.

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On the other hand, it is not believable that truth exists *only* for man. The necessary truths of which we have been speaking existed ages before there were any men to know them—existed in fact from eternity. Our conclusion, therefore, must be that, since there are eternal truths, which are independent both of the human mind and of the entire physical universe, there must also exist from eternity a self-subsistent Mind in and for which these truths are eternally true.

CHAPTER VI

IS GOD PERSONAL?

IF it is really true (as we have tried to prove) that the term "Mind" or "Intelligence" is the least inadequate to describe the nature of God, then in the plain man's opinion no further proof is required that He is personal. "Mind," "Intelligence," and "Person" are almost convertible terms in his vocabulary, and he has a strong disposition to deny that a mind which is unconscious and impersonal is even conceivable.

Perhaps in the end the plain man may be found to be right, and the advocates of "impersonal mind" to be wrong. At the same time it is clearly our duty, considering the great eminence of some of those who adopt the impersonal view of God's nature, and the subtlety and ingenuity of certain of their arguments, to give the whole question serious and detailed consideration.

God's Personality a Practical Question.

The question whether God is personal or not is a practical even more than a theoretical one. For men of Western culture like ourselves, the entire possibility, both of private prayer, and of

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“cult” or public worship, hinges upon it. If God is truly personal—if (to use the warmer and more intimate language of Jesus) He is really “our Father in heaven,” then we can enter into personal relations with Him as His children ; we can love Him supremely ; we can serve and worship Him ; we can make Him our Friend and Confidant ; we can trust Him to defend our cause when all things seem against us ; and we can commit our souls to Him with hope and confidence both for time and for eternity.

But if God is not truly personal, we can do none of these things. It is no more possible for us to love and serve a God who is unconscious and impersonal, than it is possible for us to love and serve “the Rational Order of the Universe,” or the Law of Gravitation.

Nor is the attitude of the peoples of the East towards this question so very different from our own. It is true that not a few Eastern philosophies represent the Supreme Being as an impersonal, solitary, and inscrutable Power. On the other hand this Power receives no worship except in so far as it is manifested in personal form in the multiform deities of popular polytheism. For example, in India the impersonal divine essence, denoted by the neuter term *Brahmā*, receives no worship of any kind. Even the Creator, to whom the masculine form *Brahmā* is applied, is too abstract and remote a deity for the multitudes, and is said to possess only a single temple in the whole of India. The divinities who are actually

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worshipped in practice by the Indian peoples are those members of the populous Hindu pantheon, which are not only completely personal, but whose personality is conceived (at least by most worshippers) in terms of a crude anthropomorphism.

Impersonal Mind or Spirit.

In considering the problem of the divine personality, we may distinguish three main views as being possible, at any rate in the abstract :—

- (1) That God is subpersonal (*i.e.*, below personality);
- (2) That He is personal ;
- (3) That He is supra-personal (*i.e.*, above and beyond personality).

The first, however, of these views may here be dismissed from consideration, because it is equivalent to Materialism, the inadequacy of which has already been shown in the course of our attempt to prove that the Supreme Reality can be nothing short of Mind, or Reason, or Intelligence.

It is worth adding that for religious purposes it is necessary to class as forms of materialism, not only those cruder theories which regard matter and energy and their properties, or the laws of nature, or space, or time, or the unimaginable "space-time" of certain recent speculators, as being (either alone or in combination) the

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ultimate Reality ; but also those subtler and less obtrusively materialistic speculations which seek the origin of things in non-material "atoms" or "monads" or "rudimentary souls," or "mind-stuff," or "mind-dust," and the like, which, though assumed to be in some sense psychical or mental, are yet far below the level of what is ordinarily understood by Reason or Intelligence.

Ruling out, then, these materialistic and quasi-materialistic theories as inadequate, we proceed at once to consider the much more plausible contention that God is impersonal, not because He is below, but because He is above personality.

God as the Perfect Being.

By definition, and by the general agreement of theologians and philosophers, God is the absolutely Perfect Being ; from which we may conclude that if it is possible to imagine a more perfect mode of being than the personal, we must ascribe it to God.

We have no need to prove that such a higher mode of being actually exists ; provided only that we are able to imagine it. For just as a worm cannot conceive the nature of (let us say) an ape ; and an ape cannot conceive the nature of a man ; so (and quite as obviously) a man cannot conceive a Nature which absolutely transcends his own in kind as well as in degree, unless the conception of it is implanted in his mind by that Nature itself. Nothing in man's own nature or finite experience

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suggests this conception; accordingly, since it actually exists in the human mind, we have no alternative but to suppose that the Reality corresponding to it really exists and implants the conception.

The Perfections of Human Personality.

For our present purpose we may distinguish three principal perfections or excellences of human personality: (1) Intelligence or Reason; (2) Will; (3) Moral Goodness.

If we can conceive any forms of excellence superior to these, then God must possess them, and accordingly must be supra-personal.

With regard to Intelligence, we can imagine an absolute Wisdom, which knows all actual and possible things, past, present and to come, not merely individually and separately, and not indirectly as the result of a process of reasoning, but immediately and intuitively, by virtue of a timeless and comprehensive mental act, which takes in all actual and possible existence, together with all its relations.

We can also imagine a Will, not limited like man's, but capable of achieving or realizing all possible things.

Similarly, as regards Moral Goodness, we can imagine a Being, who realizes in His own nature, and that in an absolute and infinite degree, every possible moral perfection.

But we cannot think of the categories of Intelligence, Will, and Moral Goodness as being

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themselves transcended by anything higher or better. Infinite Intelligence is still Intelligence ; omnipotent Will is still Will ; and Moral Goodness, however absolute and perfect, is Moral Goodness still. The utmost efforts of both philosophical and poetical imagination fail to carry us above and beyond these categories ; and therefore in them we must rest. To assert that God is above personality, is to assert what has the twofold disadvantage of having no meaning, and of having no basis in experience. Intelligence, Will, and Moral Goodness, as known to us in experience, are always attributes or powers of some personal being ; and if we suppose them perfected by being raised to infinity, it is only as attributes or powers of an Infinite Personality that we are able to conceive them. Of course, in the abstract, it is possible that some supra-personal Power may exist, but if it does, it is at any rate certain that it is not only unknown, but also unknowable—at least by man.

Is Infinite Personality Possible ?

But it is plausibly objected, that if we appeal to experience, we must suppose God's Personality to be finite, because human personality is finite ; and further, that finitude belongs so essentially to the very idea of personality that, if we suppose it removed, personality itself disappears.

The reply is that, though the perfections just mentioned, viz., Intelligence, Will, and Moral

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Goodness, as we know them in man, are admittedly finite perfections ; yet potentially and in their ideal they are *infinite* perfections.

It is characteristic of the human mind, and one of the chief evidences that it is made in the image of God, that it is able to conceive, not only the actual, but the ideal, not only what is, but what ought to be, not only the finite, but (in principle at least) the infinite, not only the relative and imperfect, but also the unconditioned and absolute.

Accordingly, as soon as the human mind grasps the meaning of Intelligence, Will, and Moral Goodness, and makes them objects of reflection, it tends to think of them, not only in their imperfect embodiment in finite human nature, but also in their ideal character as infinite perfections, as which alone, of course, they can belong to an infinite Personality.

Consequently the conception of infinite Personality is not really contradictory, partly for the reason already given, that the chief perfections of personality are in principle infinite perfections, and partly because the essence of personality lies, not in its being limited, nor in its being distinct from other personalities, nor in its relations (important as these are in the case of human persons), but simply and solely in its positive inherent character as a spiritual "self," able to know, to will, and to realize moral goodness.

The conclusion of the whole matter seems to be that Personality—at least in its ideal perfection—

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belongs only to God ; and that personality in man, though real, is imperfect, as being finite.

So far from it being true that Infinity excludes Personality, it seems on the contrary to be established (as Lotze so forcibly maintained) that only an Infinite Being can be personal in the fullest and most absolute sense.

The Theory of Impersonal Intelligence.

Much of the modern tendency to deny personality and self-consciousness to God is due to the excessive use by philosophers of abstract in place of concrete terms, and to the abuse of abstract reasoning.

There are not a few philosophers and psychologists, who speak so continually of Intelligence in the abstract, that they are constantly in danger of forgetting that Intelligence in the concrete—Intelligence as known in actual experience—never exists alone, but is always an activity of some individual and personal self.

When we come to think the matter out to the bottom, we perceive that in all cases where Intelligence is actually exercised, at least three factors are involved : viz., (1) a personal self, that knows ; (2) the act of knowing ; and (3) the object of knowledge. The third factor is not entirely eliminated even in the act of self-knowledge, for there is at least a psychological distinction between the self as knowing, and the self as known.

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We may proceed, then, to argue that, since there can be no Intelligence which is not *someone's* Intelligence, and no Will which is not *someone's* Will, and no Moral Goodness which is not *someone's* Moral Goodness, therefore if these attributes or powers really exist in God, He must be a fully personal Being—a *living God*—not a mere combination of abstract qualities.

Psychology of the Unconscious.

No real analogy in favour of the existence of a supreme Intelligence of an abstract and impersonal nature can be drawn from what the New Psychology calls the “unconscious” mental processes, which go on beneath the threshold of consciousness in the human mind.

For in the first place these activities seem to be not really “unconscious,” but “subconscious” (that is, they are conscious in their own nature, but are not perceived or attended to by the principal centre of consciousness); and in the second place they are closely connected with—and indeed form integral parts of—a fully personal mind, which in its major activities—particularly those of thinking, knowing, willing, and making moral decisions—is both conscious and self-conscious.

It follows that if we have reason—as possibly we have—for supposing that there are at work in the universe certain minor spiritual activities akin to our own “subconscious” mental states, then

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the inference that we ought to draw is, not that they afford evidence of the existence of a superior mind or minds of an impersonal character, but rather that they are connected with a higher mental centre or centres, which is or which are fully personal and conscious.

CHAPTER VII

THE MORAL PERFECTION OF GOD

THE possibility of religious worship—at least for the peoples of the West—stands or falls with belief in the moral perfection of God. Western civilization has less to boast of than we sometimes imagine ; but this at least stands to its credit, that it has taught the average worshipper to demand absolute moral perfection in his object of worship, and to refuse to be satisfied with anything less.

Such a demand is something of a novelty in the world's history. Two thousand years ago the ordinary citizen of the Roman Empire, and even the average philosopher, found himself able to worship, with few or no qualms of conscience, a whole pantheon of imperfect and even evil divinities : Jupiter of the many amours ; Hermes, the protector of the thief and the perjurer ; Aphrodite, the patroness of the courtesans of Corinth ; and even so malignant a personality as Ares or Mars.

Even to this day in the East, moral perfection—or even moral respectability—is not usually required in an object of popular worship. The gross licentiousness of Krishna is usually admired and envied rather than reprobated by his numerous

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devotees; and the repulsive blood-thirstiness of Durga, a being more like a ghoul than a divinity, has been no hindrance to her acceptance as the tutelary goddess of the whole province of Bengal.

In Europe, however, for the last fifteen hundred years, chiefly through the spread of Christian principles (though the influence of Plato in this matter must also be recognized), God and goodness have become practically convertible terms. It is now a psychological impossibility for the average European to worship any being, however powerful, who is not believed by him to possess every possible moral perfection, without any admixture of moral evil.

External Evidence for God's Moral Perfection.

Nevertheless, the question still remains, whether there is sufficient evidence or other reason for believing that God really possesses that perfect Moral Goodness, which (according to modern Western ideas) must be attributed to Him, if He is to be worshipped.

In the first place it seems to be clear that the available external evidence, taken alone, is inadequate to establish the moral perfection of God.

The very existence of sin in a world assumed to have been created and now to be ruled by a perfectly good and absolutely omnipotent Being, gives rise to a situation which presents a dark enigma (perhaps incapable of solution) to the

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philosopher, and a grave cause of scandal even to the devout believer.

And even if we relieve God of direct responsibility for sin, by assuming the reality of human (and superhuman) Free Will, which God respects and will not coerce, other difficulties to be alluded to presently still remain.

The Injustices of this World.

In favour of the divine justice and benevolence it may be urged that by the operation of the laws of nature (and therefore by the ordinance of God) in the great majority of cases the good things of life—health and happiness, esteem and honour, love and friendship—fall to the lot of the righteous rather than of the wicked ; and further that public opinion, and the criminal law (which, so far as they are properly exercised, may be regarded as instruments of the divine justice) habitually punish vice and misconduct at least of the more glaring and anti-social kinds.

But on the other hand it has been a subject of just complaint by moralists in every age, that in numerous instances vice is triumphant and virtue oppressed ; that the innocent suffer for the sins of the guilty ; that the lot of the world's greatest benefactors and saints has too often been persecution and martyrdom ; and that, apart altogether from human agency and apparently by the direct volition of God, the righteous are often smitten with horrible and incurable diseases—cancer,

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arthritis, leprosy, paralysis, and even insanity, and that both they and their families are often involved, like Job, in undeserved calamities.

There is no need to show by quotations, because every Bible-reader knows, how seriously these difficulties perplexed the minds of not a few of the Psalmists, and of the authors of Job and Ecclesiastes.

The following passage, however, taken from a heathen writing, Cicero's *Dialogue On the Nature of the Gods*, is probably not quite so familiar. The pontiff Cotta, arguing as an Academic against the Stoic doctrine that the world is ruled by a Righteous and Benevolent Providence, expresses himself as follows :

“ If the gods really exercised such a Providence as the Stoics assume, things would go well with the righteous and ill with the wicked, which is not the case. Had the gods really cared for the interests of the human race, they would have created all men good, or at least would have provided for the welfare of all virtuous men.

“ Why then, I ask, was the body of the hero Regulus exposed to the cruelty of the Carthaginians ? Why did not the walls of his own house protect [the younger] Africanus [who was treacherously assassinated in his bed] ? Why is my uncle, Publius Rutilius, a man of spotless integrity, now in exile ? Why was the chief pontiff, Quintus Scaevola, a perfect example of moderation and sagacity, butchered before the statue of Vesta ? Why was that most treacherous of mankind,

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Caius Marius, able to command the death of a man of such eminence as Quintus Catulus? Why too had Marius the good fortune to die in his own house at an advanced age, while holding his seventh consulship?

“For eight and thirty years Dionysius of Syracuse reigned as tyrant over a wealthy and flourishing state. Jupiter did not strike him with his thunderbolt, nor was he worn away with painful and lingering disease. He died in his own bed; and, in order that this drama of tyranny might have a glorious end, he handed on his regal power, acquired by crime, to his son.

“Why need I speak of Socrates, whose death, whenever I read Plato, moves me to tears. Cannot you see that, if the gods are responsible for human affairs, the distinction between the good man and the bad man is by their own ordinance abolished?”¹

Cotta’s arguments are undeniably weighty; and, speaking personally, I do not see how it is possible, if we regard only the actual state of human affairs and ignore the inward testimony of our moral consciousness, to do more than conclude that God is a mixture of good and evil—that He is probably more just than unjust, and more benevolent than cruel, but that He is very far indeed from being morally perfect. Upon the whole, the external evidence does not seem to me to warrant much more than the conclusion of John Mill: “There is much appearance that pleasure is agreeable to the Creator, while there is

¹ Bk. III, 32-35, transposed, and slightly adapted.

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very little, if any, appearance that pain is so ; and there is a certain amount of justification for inferring, on grounds of Natural Theology alone, that benevolence is one of the attributes of the Creator.

“ But to jump from this to the inference that His sole or chief purposes are those of benevolence, and that the single end and aim of Creation was the happiness of His creatures, is not only not justified by any evidence but is a conclusion in opposition to such evidence as we have.”¹

Argument from the Moral Consciousness.

Much may be and has been said to weaken the force of the argument against the divine goodness based upon the existence of evil and especially of injustice in the world ; but it is impossible to frame an adequate theodicy, so long, at least, as we confine ourselves to the consideration of external events, and of the affairs of the present life.

There is, however, another line of argument, based on the nature of the human soul and the testimony of the moral consciousness, which views the problem from an entirely different angle ; and which, if duly considered and weighed, will probably be found to afford a reasonable assurance that after all the first postulate of traditional theism, that God is morally perfect, is not a mere illusion generated by our wishes and hopes, but on the contrary (in spite of all the plausible arguments to the contrary) has a solid basis in reason.

¹ *Three Essays on Religion*, p. 192.

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If we start from the entirely reasonable principle that the human soul, as being the highest and best of the known works of God, and akin to Him in nature, affords more reliable evidence by far of His character and purposes than do external facts and events, we shall be led to a conclusion of a different—and indeed of an opposite—nature.

Although no human soul is free from sin, yet sin is felt to be contrary to the soul's original and proper nature. Every human soul is so constituted as naturally to love and admire what is morally good, and to hate and disapprove what is morally evil. Even while sinning, the soul is distinctly conscious that it is violating its own God-given nature—a nature formed for righteousness not wickedness. Imperfect as the human soul in its present condition is, it has within itself the principle of, and the aspiration towards, perfection. It is conscious of a perfect Moral Ideal, eternal in the heavens, by which it feels itself attracted, and towards which it aspires.

Plato on the Vision of the Soul.

That the human soul, though hindered by sin and imperfection, yet desires and aspires after the good, and attains some vision (however dim and distant) of that which is absolutely and eternally perfect—*i.e.*, of Godhead and Goodness itself, is the doctrine, not only of the Christian Church, but also of every school of philosophy

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worthy of its name. We may make our own with few reservations the glowing language of Plato :¹

“ The nature of the soul is a theme of large and more than mortal discourse. The human soul, by contemplating and feeding upon what is divine—on beauty, wisdom, goodness, and the like—is nourished and grows apace ; but when fed upon evil and foulness and the opposite of good, it wastes and falls away.

“ As the world revolves, the soul that is worthy views the heaven which is above the heavens, where abides the very being with which true knowledge is concerned ; the colourless, formless, intangible essence, visible only to mind, the pilot of the soul. There, receiving the food proper to her, and rejoicing at beholding reality, the soul is replenished and made glad. In company with the gods, she beholds justice, and temperance, and knowledge absolute, not in the form of generation or of relation, but knowledge absolute in existence absolute ; and beholding the other true existences in like manner, and feasting upon them, she passes down into the interior of the heavens, and returns home [to her life in the body and in time].”

The Moral Ideal as Law.

Plato, like Socrates, regarded virtue chiefly as knowledge ; nevertheless at times he describes the Supreme Good, as not merely an object of knowledge, but as also a supreme *Law*, binding all in-

¹ *Phaedrus*, pp. 246 ff., adapted and abridged.

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telligences human and divine: “Law is the king of all, of mortals as well as of immortals.”¹

This view later became characteristic of Stoicism. The Stoics gave an entirely new emphasis to the soul’s consciousness of *duty* and *moral obligation*, and drew therefrom a persuasive proof that there must exist a Supreme Moral Law, identical with the holy will of Zeus or Jupiter, to which the entire universe owes obedience.

This Law they described as, “Right Reason, which commands what ought to be done, and forbids what ought not to be done, . . . which pervades all things and is identical with Zeus, the lord and ruler of all that is.”²

This Stoic conception of the Supreme Good as Law naturally appealed to the legal and political instincts of the Romans, whose own jurisprudence, in consequence of the extension of their Empire, was rapidly becoming the law of the whole civilized world.

“There is one true Law,” writes Cicero, “namely Right Reason, consonant with nature, co-extensive with the race of men, unchanging and eternal, which calls to duty by commanding, and deters from wrong by forbidding. The provisions of this Law cannot be abrogated either in part or in whole. We cannot be released from this Law either by Senate or by People. Nor will there be one law at Rome and another at Athens, one law now and another hereafter: but the same Law,

¹ *Gorgias*, p. 484b, quoting Pindar.

² *Diogenes Laertius*, vii. 88, quoting the Stoic Chrysippus.

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everlasting and unchangeable, will bind all nations at all times ; and there will be one common Master and Ruler of all, even God, the framer, arbiter, and proposer of this Law."

It is not surprising that the Christian writer Lactantius, who quotes this passage with approval, describes the heathen orator as speaking with "an almost divine voice."¹

Universal Recognition of the Moral Ideal as Real.

Consciousness of the existence of a supreme Moral Law, which is altogether holy and righteous, is practically universal among peoples of the higher culture. And it is specially worthy of observation that some of the most emphatic assertions in recent times of the real objective existence and supremacy of this Law have come from thinkers whose general attitude towards theological and philosophical questions is sceptical.

"Duty!" writes Kant, the founder of the modern Critical Philosophy, "Duty! Thou great, thou exalted name! Wondrous thought, that workest neither by fond insinuation, nor by flattery, nor by any threat, but merely by holding up thy naked Law in the soul, and so extorting for thyself always reverence, if not always obedience—before whom all appetites are dumb, however secretly they rebel—whence thy origin? Where find we the root of thy august descent, thus

¹ *The Divine Institutes*, vi. 8.

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loftily disclaiming all kindred with appetite and desire?"

Kant answers his question by tracing back the origin of the sense of duty or obligation to "that idea of ethical perfection which is evolved by reason *a priori*," and which he regards as identical with "the idea of God as the supreme archetypal Good."

That the Moral Ideal is binding upon all intelligences, including God, is affirmed by Kant in numerous passages: for example, he says:

"The Moral Law, since it is authoritatively proclaimed by reason as holding for all intelligent beings, is not confined to man, but extends to all, even the Most High and Supreme Himself."¹

Provisional Conclusion.

In spite therefore of many objections and difficulties, some of which are perhaps not susceptible of any satisfactory solution, we seem entitled to conclude, at least provisionally: (1) that there exists an Eternal Law of Righteousness, which claims supremacy over the entire universe, and which cannot be reasonably regarded as distinct from the all-holy will of God; and (2) that we must assume as a fundamental philosophical principle the Moral Perfection of God. It seems unlikely, in fact incredible, that the Creator would

¹ These passages, taken from various works of Kant, will be found translated in the compilation, *Kant's Metaphysic of Ethics*, pp. 127, 20-21, 98.

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require man to abstain from sin as the worst of evils, and to conform his life to a standard of perfect virtue and holiness, unless His own nature were holy and righteous in the most absolute sense. The mere fact that man is required to aim at—and (on the hypothesis of human immortality) is perhaps even destined to attain—so exalted a standard as moral perfection, amounts to a practical disproof of the theory that the moral nature of God includes any element, however small, of evil or imperfection.

VIII

GOD'S MORAL PERFECTION AND THE PROBLEM OF HUMAN IMMORTALITY

IN our last chapter the argument for the perfect goodness of God was left in a somewhat precarious and unsatisfactory condition.

On the one hand it appeared that there is strong and indeed all but conclusive evidence, that there exists, quite independently of all finite minds, an objective Law of Perfect Righteousness, which claims, as of right, absolute dominion over the entire universe ; which extorts the reverent awe and homage even of those who are presumptuous enough to disobey it ; and which binds all rational natures with an obligation so absolute, that not even in imagination can we conceive it annulled or abrogated.

To the objective existence of this Moral Law, and to its supreme and regal character, we were able to produce, not only Christian, but also heathen, and (what is still more significant) even Agnostic testimonies.

But on the other hand we found that the general course of nature, and especially of human affairs, presents so many evidences of moral disorder, that there are great practical difficulties in accepting

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the fundamental assumption of theism, that the world is controlled and ruled by a single Will, which is at once omnipotent and holy.

We seem, therefore, to be faced, if not with an absolute contradiction between the conclusions of reason and the facts of experience, at least with a problem of supreme difficulty, requiring arduous and thorough investigation.

Is the Moral Law Objectively Real ?

The most obvious way of resolving the apparent contradiction is to deny the objective and supernatural character of the Moral Law—to reduce it in fact from its exalted rank as the ultimate Law of the Universe, to the far humbler position of a subjective ideal of the human mind, supremely beautiful and attractive, beyond doubt, but yet having nothing objectively real corresponding with it.

To do this, however, is extremely difficult. When we come to consider the matter closely, we perceive that the Moral Law has the appearance, not only of being objectively valid, but also of possessing that universal and necessary character which is possessed by the Laws of Mathematics and of Logical Thought.

If we take any mathematical principle we please, as for example that two and two always make four and never five ; or a geometrical principle, as that the shortest distance between any two points is always a straight line ; or a logical principle, as

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that two contradictory statements cannot both be true ; we perceive at once that these truths are true, not only in this or that particular instance, but in all possible instances ; true, not only here and now, but everywhere and always ; true not only in this particular universe, but in all possible universes ; true from everlasting to everlasting—in fact so absolutely and necessarily true, that not even Omnipotence itself could alter them.

The Mutable Element in Morality.

In contrast with such immutable principles as these, it is usual in certain circles to insist upon the uncertain and variable character of the moral ideas and customs of mankind. There is hardly a vice, it is said, which by some nation or tribe is not esteemed a virtue. Cannibalism, in the form of the ceremonial eating of the bodies of dead relatives, is considered a sacred duty by many of the native inhabitants of Australia and Melanesia, as it was of old by the Massagetae of Scythia. Suicide was regarded as a virtue by the ancient Stoics, and is to-day prescribed as a duty under certain circumstances by the Japanese. Morality seems to be largely (as the name itself indicates) a matter of custom, and convention ; and (what is still more significant) the conventions which constitute it vary indefinitely. So far from it being true that human morality is based upon immutable and necessary laws, it is contended by many anthropologists that it is largely a matter of climate and geography.

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And indeed it must be frankly admitted that upon a superficial and external view of things, morality "East of Suez" is something widely different from morality West of it. Beyond all doubt, the moral ideas and practices of the head-hunters of Borneo, of the "left-hand" worshippers of Siva, and of the defenders of thuggism, suttee, and the temple-prostitution prevalent in Southern India, diverge widely from those which the peoples of Europe regard as legitimate.

It by no means follows, however, from the fact that morality contains a large conventional and variable element, that it does not also contain an element which is fundamental and permanent.

What arrests the attention of the impartial student of anthropology, is far less the extraordinary variation in detail of the moral codes of mankind, than their extraordinary agreement in principle. The general type of character esteemed virtuous has undergone little change among civilized peoples during the historical period; and, even if we take into account the practices of tribes whose morality is abnormal, there is still a vast preponderance of opinion in favour of ordinary morality. The ethical principles of the Ten Commandments may be fairly said to have behind them what amounts to ecumenical or universal consent; nor would it be difficult to construct a detailed catalogue of virtues and vices, which would command the general assent, not only of the civilized world, but also of most barbarian and savage peoples. The moral nature

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of those who are addicted to abnormal, and even foul and revolting practices, does not seem to differ very widely from that of other men. This is clearly shown by the fact that under better moral teaching they soon learn to perceive for themselves the moral hideousness of customs which they previously blindly accepted.

In modern India, for example, owing to the moral teaching of Christian missionaries, such abominations as child-marriage, suttee, human sacrifice, polygamy, the oppression of widows, contempt for outcastes, unnatural vice, and temple-prostitution, once approved (or at least not actively challenged), are now reprobated by the best opinion even of the heathen themselves.

There is good reason, therefore, for believing in the fundamental identity of the moral nature of the human race; from which it of course follows that, given proper conditions—in particular the availability of sound moral instruction, and the absence of corrupt customs which have the prestige of antiquity and authority—the moral ideas and practices of mankind may be expected to show approximate uniformity.

The Necessary Character of Moral Principles.

There is equally good reason for holding that at least the fundamental principles of morality are immutable and necessary.

If we make any fundamental moral assertion, as, for instance, that Ingratitude is a vice, or that

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Justice is a duty, or that Cruelty is abominable, we find ourselves as unable to regard it as false, as to believe that the assertion "Two and two make four" is false. As soon as we apprehend what Justice means, we perceive that we are bound to approve and practise it; and conversely, as soon as we apprehend what Ingratitude and Cruelty mean, we perceive that we are bound to reprobate and avoid them. We cannot imagine any circumstances in which it would be right to be ungrateful or cruel, or wrong to be just. Not even the direct command of God could justify the performance of an ungrateful or unjust or cruel action. Were it certainly known that such an action was commanded by the actual ruler of the universe, our conviction would be, not that the command proceeded from God, but rather that it proceeded from some evil being who had usurped His throne, and had no right but that of force to occupy it. The more we reflect upon the matter, the more clearly we perceive that the moral principles which are approved universally by the human race after due consideration are not only true, but eternally and necessarily true; that they bind all intelligent beings, not excepting God Himself, with an absolute obligation; and that they could not be changed, even by decree of Omnipotence.

Are Moral Laws Subjective?

But it may be plausibly objected that the Laws of Morality do not rest, like the Laws of Mathematics

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and of Nature, on experiment and observation. They have no objective basis in experience. They only express the subjective preferences, ideals, hopes, and prejudices of the human mind.

But it may be retorted, that the same objection may be urged with equal force against the Laws of Mathematics, and also against those fundamental Laws of Nature which we regard as necessary. It is certainly not from experience that we learn that two and two make four *in all possible cases*; nor is it by actual measuring that we know that *everywhere and always* a straight line is the shortest distance between two given points. No amount of experience of individual cases can ever give us the assurance that a Law holds good *in all possible cases*—in other words, that it is *universal and necessary*.

As an example of a necessary law of nature, we may take the Law of Universal Causation. We may learn from actual experience that this and that particular event has a cause, but we cannot possibly know from experience that *every possible event* has a cause. Yet that is what the Law of Universal Causation means, and we know it to be certainly true, gaining our knowledge, not from any experience of outward things, but from *direct intuition*, which is the only means which the mind possesses of gaining a knowledge of “first principles,” which, as being “first,” cannot be demonstrated.

All absolutely necessary and universal laws whatever, whether laws of thought, or laws of mathematics, or laws of nature, or laws of æsthetics,

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are known to be true, not by evidence, but by *intuition*. They cannot be demonstrated, but are taken for granted as the basis of our demonstrations. The fundamental Laws of Morality conform in this respect to all other necessary and universal laws. They are apprehended as true, not as the result of any induction from experience, or of any process of reasoning, but *simply in virtue of the mind's inherent power of perceiving the truth of first principles intuitively*.

The Vindication of the Divine Righteousness.

The moral difficulty which we are now considering has obvious analogies with difficulties which are continually occurring in the sphere of the physical sciences, and we are likely to be greatly helped in our investigation by considering how they are there dealt with.

If a natural event occurs (as it often does) without any apparent or known cause, the scientist does not for that reason assume any breach in the universal Law of Causation, but rather suspects the operation of some unknown cause, for which he forthwith proceeds to search. Similarly the mathematician, if his efforts to solve a problem lead to an obviously wrong result, does not assume that the Laws of Mathematics, but that he himself, is in fault. He supposes, for instance, that he has either stated the problem wrongly, or has made a mistake in his calculations.

Universally in the natural sciences a necessary law is trusted, even against the evidence of

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apparent experience ; and the investigator proceeds, either to correct his faulty observations, or else to construct some more comprehensive theory designed to reconcile the facts of experience with the law which they seem to contradict. For example, he accounts for planetary motions which apparently contradict the Law of Gravitation, by assuming the existence of an unknown planet whose attraction is the cause of the perturbations.

If our theology is to be scientific, we must apply a similar principle to the solution of our religious difficulties. If, for example, some particular event or class of events, such as the death of Jesus, or of Socrates, or of St Lawrence, or the triumphant life and apparently happy death of some fortunate tyrant like Dionysius the Elder, or the success of some soulless profiteer or extortioner, whose heartless wickedness is rewarded by fame and honour, seems difficult to reconcile with the divine Justice, we ought not forthwith to conclude that the Justice of God is really at fault, but rather to set to work to frame a more adequate theory of Providence and human life, which will avail to reconcile the flagrant injustices of this world (which only sophistry can deny) with the absolute righteousness of God, which is a necessary truth of reason.

Human Immortality.

And upon reflection it will be found that there is one theory and only one, which is adequate to

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remove the apparent contradictions, and to solve the greatest of all religious and moral difficulties.

If we adopt the hypothesis, which has much to recommend it on other grounds, that human life, instead of terminating at death, is indefinitely prolonged, then it will clearly be possible for God to make compensation for the wrongs of this earthly life, to vindicate His perfect justice by rendering to every man according to his works, and to secure that consummation of His moral government which reason imperatively demands, by bringing about the final triumph of good over evil. Only by the hypothesis of a future life and a future judgment, can we adequately reconcile the facts of experience with the divine Righteousness, and thus "vindicate the ways of God to man."

It is deeply significant that the same conclusion has been reached by not a few whose attitude towards traditional forms of religion is detached or even hostile. No one has expressed it more fervently and emphatically than the author of *Religion within the Limits of Pure Reason*, who in nearly all his philosophical works affirms that the Existence of God, the Immortality of the Soul, and the Freedom of the Will, though incapable of demonstrative proof, are "necessary postulates of the practical reason," and who concedes practically all for which theists need contend in the statement: "Without a God, and without a world invisible to us now but hoped for, the glorious ideas of morality are indeed objects of approbation and admiration, but cannot be the springs of purpose and action."

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In a similar spirit so cautious a reasoner as Henry Sidgwick could write : “ In proportion as a man . . . [feels himself impelled] to do what is right and reasonable as such, his demand for the removal of conflict from the intuitions of his reason will be intense and imperious. Thus we are not surprised to find Socrates—the type for all ages of the man in whom this desire is predominant—declaring with simple conviction, that ‘ If the rulers of the universe do not prefer the just man to the unjust, it is better to die than to live.’ . . . We have then to regard [belief in a future life] as an hypothesis logically necessary to avoid a fundamental contradiction in one chief department of our thought ”¹

Other Arguments for Immortality.

There are other arguments in favour of human immortality, some based on the unity and simplicity of the soul, which is held to guarantee its indissolubility (this is the argument of Socrates in the *Phaedo*) ; others based on supposed communications from the dead (this is the argument in Lodge’s *Raymond*) ; others of a much more weighty and reliable nature, derived from the soul’s natural tendency to seek and possess the good, and not to be ultimately satisfied with anything less than the Supreme Good, which is God ; but there is none of them which possesses the

¹ *Method of Ethics*, concluding chapter, slightly adapted, and abridged.

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immediate cogency and power of direct appeal to the popular mind which belongs to the argument from the moral character of God.

It was to this that Jesus appealed, when He drew from the admitted truth that Jehovah is “the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob,” the all-important inference that these patriarchs are still alive, and in His keeping—“He is not a God of the dead, but of the living, for all live unto Him” (St Luke xx. 38). What Jesus meant to say was that, just as a righteous man is faithful to his friends, so God is faithful to His, and that thus His faithfulness ensures their immortality.

A Final Objection.

We may deal briefly in conclusion with the objection sometimes urged, that the justice and benevolence of God are sufficiently exhibited in and through the Laws of Nature, which are of such a character, that upon the whole virtue is rewarded with happiness, and vice with misery, even in this present life; and that accordingly there is no need, at least for the purpose of vindicating the divine Justice, to suppose another.

Justice, however, is not a matter of statistics or averages. It is owed to individual persons as such, from which it follows, that unless God is strictly just to every soul which He has created, His justice is at fault. Even earthly rulers are accustomed to correct the injustices which inevitably occur from the rigid application of

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their enactments to all persons without exception, by applying to what are known as "hard cases" the principles of equity. We cannot reasonably attribute to God any less regard for equity than is shown by the average earthly ruler in his administration of justice.

As Canon Streeter has convincingly argued in reply to Mr H. G. Wells, who entertains no egotistical desire for a "separate immortality," and maintains that "whether we live for ever or die to-morrow does not affect righteousness": "If the Divine Righteousness may lightly 'scrap' the individual, human righteousness may do the same. The most conspicuous mark of the moral level of any community is the value it sets on human personality, . . . [and] its reluctance to sacrifice even its least worthy members. The disinterestedness which is content with a Universe in which his own *ego* will soon cease to be is much to the credit of Mr Wells; it would not be to God's credit were He equally content. What can we say of [the Universe] or the Power behind It, if It treats the individuality of heroic souls like oyster-shells at a banquet, whisked from the table to make room for the next course?" (*Reality*, p. 313.)

CHAPTER IX

THEISM AND PANTHEISM

PANTHEISM is that religious theory which identifies God with the world, and the world with God. As a living creed it is especially characteristic of India, where it forms the philosophic basis of the entire system of Hindu religion.

In the ancient Greco-Roman world the Stoics were perhaps the most consistent and thorough-going advocates of Pantheism. Their founder, Zeno, taught explicitly that "the being of God is the entire universe and the heaven"; and Chrysippus, their second founder, identified Zeus, or God, with "the entire system of nature," in which he included not only the physical universe, and the human race, but also the gods.

The Stoics were accustomed to speak of God as the "soul" or "reason" of the world; but inasmuch as they drew no fundamental distinction between mind and matter, and spoke of the human soul, and even of the Divine Nature, as "corporeal" or "material," as well as "rational," it is evident that they identified God with the universe in its material as well as its spiritual aspect. Accordingly Clement of Alexandria, who like Origen strongly disliked their "materialism," did not misrepresent

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them when he wrote, “The Stoics affirm that God is essentially both matter and spirit ; and they give, of course, a similar account of the [human] soul.”¹

The most extreme representative in antiquity of the opposite tendency in religion, that which stresses the divine *transcendence*, was Aristotle. God, according to Aristotle, is not immanent in the world, or actively employed in guiding its destinies. He is highly exalted above it, and being self-sufficing, self-existing, and possessing the principle of beatitude within Himself, finds His felicity in the eternal contemplation of His own perfections.

In a somewhat similar manner the Epicureans, who unlike Aristotle were definitely polytheists, placed the dwelling-places of the gods in a remote heaven, where they enjoyed continual pleasure, without any of the cares and responsibilities of government.

In the modern Western world the most notable and influential pantheistic systems have been those of Spinoza and Hegel.

The opposite doctrine of extreme Transcendence finds its best modern representation in Deism. The Deists believed that the world owed its origin to a Creator, but their tendency was to regard it as a self-acting machine, so skilfully constructed, as, when once started, to require no attention on the part of its Maker.

¹ *Miscellanies*, v. 14.

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Theism distinguished from Pantheism.

The main difference between Theism and Pantheism is that, whereas the latter confuses and identifies the Creator and His creation, the former distinguishes and contrasts them.

The God of Theism infinitely transcends the universe ; the latter owes its existence to His creative *fiat*, has a purely contingent and conditional mode of existence, and would shrink into the nothingness from which it sprang and to which it continually tends, were it not preserved in being by the continual operation of His sustaining will.

The God of Pantheism, on the other hand, is in no sense a Creator ; nor is He exalted above the natural order. So far from being transcendent, He is simply the universe itself—"the All"—regarded from the point of view mainly of its unity, order, and rationality.

It is usual to speak of Pantheism as a theory of exaggerated Immanence, and for certain purposes it may be so regarded ; but in philosophic strictness it is a theory of Identity, not Immanence.

Immanence means *Indwelling* ; and it is obvious that one thing cannot dwell within another, unless the two are distinct. For example, the oxygen of the air may correctly be said to be "immanent" in the nitrogen, because although the two elements are most intimately mixed, they are nevertheless distinct. So also the human soul may rightly be said to be "immanent" in the human body, because although body and

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soul unite to form a single person, they are quite distinct in nature.

On the other hand, the entire or integral man, compounded of soul and body personally united, cannot be regarded as immanent in respect of himself. He is clearly not immanent, either in his soul, or in his body, or in his entire self. He simply *is* himself; and, of course, his being himself excludes his being immanent in himself.

Similarly the God of Pantheism, being identical with the universe, cannot be immanent in it, for that would involve the absurdity of His being *immanent in Himself*.

The truth is, that Theism alone is able to satisfy the insistent demand of the normal religious consciousness, that the object of worship should be at once immanent and transcendent: *immanent*, as the sustaining principle which supports the life and being of all things, and *transcendent* as the Creator of the world and its supreme Lord and King. Pantheism (which merges God in the universe), and Deism (which takes a purely external view of His relation thereto), are equally irreconcilable with the Immanence of God in the world in any coherent sense.

Pantheism and Personality.

It is frequently affirmed that Pantheism excludes the personality of God; and this is certainly the case with numerous pantheistic systems both ancient and modern.

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But there seems to be no reason in the nature of things why Pantheism should exclude or deny God's personality. If the universe really is, as most ancient and not a few modern Pantheists teach, an "embodied soul" or "living organism"; or again, if those modern Idealists are right who view it as "a coherent system of thought," it seems perfectly possible to regard it as a personal unity.

Beyond question, the all-embracing "Zeus" of the ancient Stoics, who was believed to be not only supremely intelligent, but also benevolent, just, and watchful over the interests of man and the universe, had marked personal characteristics. Nearly every line of the famous "Hymn to Zeus" of the Stoic Cleanthes is meaningless, unless God is personal.

Moreover, if the universe really is (as Absolute Idealism supposes) "a coherent system of thought," the natural inference seems to be that this thought implies a Thinker. All thought, so far as our experience extends, is the thought of some mind, and all minds known to us are personal. We are quite unable even to imagine the nature of a thought which no one thinks, or of a Mind or Spirit which is not in some real sense personal.

It seems on the whole probable that the "Absolute" or "God" of Hegel, though conceived as "Spirit," was not regarded by the Master himself as personal. But there is nothing in the system of Absolute Idealism itself to preclude the view that the Supreme and All-

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comprehending Spirit is personal. The Absolute Spirit is, of course, infinite ; and were limitation or finitude a necessary note of Personality, it is obvious that “the Absolute” could not be personal. But if, as we have tried to show, the usual theistic conception of an Infinite Personality does not involve a contradiction, there is obviously no inconsistency involved in regarding the Absolute as personal in a transcendent sense.

Pantheism and the Problem of Evil.

The view that Pantheism is inconsistent with the maintenance of a high standard of morality, receives considerable support from the comprehensive and detailed information which is now available of the religious cults of Hindustan.

But with regard to the West, the evidence is not so clear. It must be candidly acknowledged that the most influential systems of Western Pantheism have not proved in practice to be destructive of morality. In some cases they seem even to have raised the prevailing standard. For example, the system of morality taught by the ancient Stoics, though lacking in sympathy and tenderness and in the gentler virtues generally, was austere, and lofty to the pitch of heroism. Nor can the charge be fairly brought against the followers of Spinoza and Hegel, that they have as a rule been lacking in moral earnestness. Nevertheless, it is logically involved, beyond doubt, in every system of genuine Pantheism, that God

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is the author of evil—nay, even the committer of sin.

Pantheism affirms that there is ultimately only a single “substance” (or “real being”), and not many, as Theism and common sense suppose. Every human person—the bad man equally with the good man—is “consubstantial with God,” or (to use more popular but less accurate language) “a part of God.” An individual man is not a distinct being or “substance,” relatively independent of God, and possessing the power of free-will or self-determination as Christianity and common sense suppose, but merely a transient “mode,” or “phase,” or “aspect” or “moment” of the one “universal substance,” which is God.¹ It follows that whenever a sinner perjures himself, or forges a cheque, or commits a cowardly murder, or perpetrates a deed of fiendish cruelty, God Himself commits all these crimes. There is no escape from this conclusion on pantheistic principles.

Nor is this difficulty sensibly relieved by laying stress on the complementary pantheistic affirmation, that God is equally responsible for the virtuous acts of the good man. A being who combines the practice of virtue with addiction to vice and the commission of crime, cannot fairly be called morally good; and certainly cannot be an object of worship—at least for Europeans.

¹ This is technically expressed by saying that finite minds possess only “adjectival” not “substantial” being.

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The truth is that, viewed from the moral standpoint, Pantheism is a nest of incoherences and contradictions. Its God is at once the malignant assassin and his innocent victim ; at once the criminal and his judge. In ancient Athens he was identical both with Socrates and with his unjust accusers and judges. In Palestine he was at once Jesus, and Barabbas, and the chief priests, and Pontius Pilate. In the American Civil War he fought for slavery with the armies of the South, and against it with the armies of the North. All these and similar absurdities—for absurdities they are—are involved, not merely in this or that particular variety of Pantheism, but in Pantheism as such. Every thorough-going Pantheist is logically committed to them.

Evil as a Form of Good.

It is indeed contended, in justification of the pantheistic position, that moral evil is as necessary to the due perfection of the universe as is moral good.

But the arguments against this view seem to be conclusive. For—

(1) Our moral consciousness, which alone makes us aware of the nature of good and evil, distinctly testifies that sin or moral evil, so far from tending towards perfection, is a *violation* of the Supreme Law of the universe, or (to use theistic language) the will of God. We are as intuitively

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certain that sin violates this Law, as we are that two and two make four and not five.

(2) It contradicts both reason and common sense to suppose that the universe is better with than without lying, murder, theft, adultery, cruelty, hypocrisy, the crimes of the Borgias, and such moral catastrophes as the late Great War.

The Hegelian attempt to view sin as a lesser form of good, is the most ingenious of its kind, and merits at least respectful attention.

Hegel regarded sin as the middle member of a moral triad. Below it is innocence, above it is virtue. Through sin—and only through sin—is it possible to make the transition from mere innocence to that higher kind of moral goodness which is denominated virtue. The conclusion is then drawn that sin, though not absolutely good, is “good as a means” to the attainment of the higher good of virtue. This doctrine was by Hegel brought into close connection with the Scriptural doctrine of the Fall of Man, which he regarded as a rise rather than a fall in the moral scale.

It is not to be denied that Hegel’s teaching contains an important element of truth which demands recognition. It is perfectly true that *it is only by conflict with temptation* (i.e., resistance to possible evil), that finite spirits can rise from the imperfect stage of innocence to the higher stage of assured virtue. But Hegel is wrong in imagining that it is necessary for the human

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soul to *succumb* to temptation in order to rise. In so far as a man succumbs to temptation, he does not rise above the state of innocence, but falls below it. The only possible means of rising in the moral scale is to resist temptation and vanquish it.

It is, of course, true that God is able to bring good out of evil ; and that often in the course of human history He has made the very worst of crimes the means of the advancement of His kingdom. The death of Socrates probably did more to commend his example and teaching to posterity than the whole of his virtuous life. The greatest crime in all history, the Crucifixion of Jesus, became through the Providence of God a supreme factor in the salvation of the human race.

Nevertheless it remains true that the natural tendency of evil is to produce, not good, but evil ; just as it is the undoubted tendency of good to generate its like. It is through good, not through evil, that the Providence of God *normally* operates to increase the sum of goodness in the world.

Pantheism and Worship.

The relation of Pantheism to certain practical problems of worship merits more attention than it usually receives.

In the East (as has already been pointed out) the existence of evil in the object of worship is not usually felt to be a difficulty ; it is quite otherwise in the West.

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The Western worshipper makes two insistent demands upon the God whom he worships :

(1) That He should be morally perfect in His own proper nature ;

(2) That He should take sides and actively intervene in the agelong conflict between good and evil.

The God of Theism—or at least of Christian Theism—satisfies both these demands. He is regarded as holy in Himself, and also as “the Lord of Hosts”—the Commander-in-chief of the united armies of heaven and earth in their campaign against the powers of evil.

The god of Pantheism, on the other hand, satisfies neither of these demands. For, if (as some suppose) he is “beyond good and evil,” he obviously takes no interest in the conflict between them ; and if on the other hand he is partly good and partly evil, he fights on both sides.

This lack of Transcendence of the god of Pantheism is a further difficulty from the point of view of practical devotion.

Without going so far as Otto, who contends that the religious consciousness testifies that God is “wholly other,” *i.e.*, so extremely transcendent as to be almost unknowable ; we may yet very reasonably maintain that Transcendence is an authentic note of His nature—so much so that a deity who is not conceived as highly exalted above the entire order of nature, and belonging essentially to the supramundane sphere, cannot in practice be worshipped.

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The god of Pantheism, however, lacks this Transcendence. He is only the universe under another name. In worshipping “god,” the logical pantheist is constrained to worship the sun, the moon, and the stars, like the ancient Chaldeans; the mountains, forests, and rivers, like the ancient Greeks; brute beasts, including apes, crocodiles, cats, and serpents, like the ancient Egyptians; “humanity” like the modern Positivists; and, of course, *himself*, as a part of the universe.

It is no effective reply to this contention to insist that the whole of the universe, not its parts regarded individually, is the object of pantheistic worship. For although this is true, it is also true that it is impossible to worship a whole, without also worshipping every one of its parts. Unless every individual part of the universe, including the most insignificant insect, worm, microbe, and even atom, is included in the act of worship, the universe as a whole is not worshipped.

It follows with logical rigour, if the premisses of Pantheism are correct, that a necessary part of our worship of God is the worship of matter, of energy, of the laws of nature, of brute beasts, of one another, and of *ourselves*.

It is not easy to see how such a worship as this, which includes the worship of our fellow-mortals and of *ourselves*, accords either with that “creature-consciousness,” which Otto rightly regards as one of the most essential ingredients of true devotion, or with Christian humility.

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The Logical Difficulties involved in Pantheism.

We have dealt at some length with the moral, theological, and devotional difficulties involved in Pantheism.

There are also difficulties no less grave of a logical and metaphysical nature, to which brief allusion must be made.

If there exists, as Pantheism affirms, only a single Universal Mind or "Experience," of which finite minds are mere "phases," "modes," or unreal "appearances," then obviously this Universal Mind must think every human thought, and entertain as its own every human belief. It is necessary to attribute to it, not only every true human belief, but also every false one, including every superstition however irrational and degrading.

The contention that "In the Absolute all contradictions are reconciled and synthesized," so far from carrying conviction, is not even plausible. How, for example, can "the Absolute" reconcile the usual belief (which of course he holds) that Shakespeare wrote his own plays, with the contradictory belief (which, on pantheistic principles, he must also hold) that Bacon was their real author?

The truth is that only *apparent* contradictions, not real ones, admit of reconciliation and "synthesis." It frequently happens that two statements contradict one another not entirely but only in part. In such a case they can be reconciled by omitting those elements which are

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in conflict, and retaining those which are in harmony.

In the progress of science it is frequently found possible to reconcile partial and inadequate theories which are in seeming conflict, by means of a "higher synthesis." A more comprehensive theory is framed, in the light of which the scattered fragments of truth which previously seemed to be in conflict, or at least not to form a coherent whole, fall into their proper places, and are at once seen to be harmonious.

In no case, however, can irreducible error be reconciled with truth, or really contradictory propositions combined in a harmonious statement. It is as impossible for "the Absolute," as for a human mind, to reconcile two really contradictory statements.

Another objection to Pantheism of a more subtle kind is the difficulty of understanding why, if there is in reality only a single Infinite Mind and Will, even the *appearance* of finite minds and wills possessing an individuality of their own should ever have arisen. Human minds certainly *appear* to have substantial being of their own; and human wills certainly *appear* to be free. Why then, unless "the Absolute" wishes intentionally to mislead, should He bring into existence these delusive "appearances," which have the outward form of substantiality without its reality?

To deal adequately, however, with metaphysical problems of this nature, would occupy more space than the plan of this book admits.

CHAPTER X

SEMI-PANTHEISM

THE moral and religious difficulties involved in thorough-going Pantheism or “Monism”¹ are so extreme, that at the present day there is a widespread tendency, even among those philosophers whose thought tends in the “monistic” direction, to modify the rigour of their systems in such a way as to render them consistent with the moral perfection of God, and with such a distinction between the being of God and that of creatures, as will enable the truths of human free-will and moral responsibility to be affirmed without inconsistency.

The modified form of Pantheism which is most in favour at present, on the one hand distinguishes God from the universe, and on the other does not regard Him as independent of it.

“Semi-pantheism” (as we shall venture to call this tendency of thought) regards the relation between the Creator and His creation as “organic”; and freely speaks of it as one of “mutual dependence.” Ordinary Theism regards the relation of

¹ “Monism” is the doctrine that the universe consists of only a single all-inclusive “substance,” or real being, not many. If this substance is regarded as “spirit” the result is Pantheism; if as “matter,” or physical energy, Materialism.

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“dependence” as being on the side of the creature alone. God, from its standpoint, is self-existent and absolute, owing nothing in the way of blessedness or perfection to creatures. They need Him, but He does not need them. All that they possess in the way of dependent being and of finite perfection comes from Him, who, since He is Being itself and Perfection itself, is the sole fountain of existence. Creatures receive everything from Him ; but He receives nothing from them—nothing, that is, which was not His already in a far more absolute manner before it was theirs by His gift.

Creatures can, of course, render to God gratitude and thanks for His gifts — including the gift of existence ; but to suppose that they are able to give Him anything which in any way augments His intrinsic Beatitude and Perfection, amounts, from the theistic standpoint, to a denial of first principles which are absolutely vital.

Semi-pantheism, on the other hand, while admitting that the universe is in some sense the work of God, and that He may not unfittingly be spoken of as its “Creator,” is quite explicit in its teaching that He is *dependent* upon created things, and that apart from them He neither is nor can become perfect. We are told, for example, that “Creation is the complement of God” ; that “Creatures are as necessary to the existence of God as He is to theirs : neither is complete without the other” ; that “the relation of God to the world is organic” ; that not only do

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creatures live and move and have their being in God, but also, and not less truly, "in them He lives and moves and has His being."

Thinkers of this school are not entirely at one as to the distinct "substantiality" of the human soul, regarded in its relation to the Divine Substance. Some maintain the theory of the Divinity of Man, actual or potential. In their view, the human soul either is now, or will hereafter become, when it has attained to sinlessness, "divine" or "consubstantial with God." From their standpoint the ultimate goal of humanity is "deification" or "apotheosis"—an exalted destiny which they think has already been attained by one member of the human race, viz., Jesus of Nazareth, whose example may be followed by others—*sic itur ad astra.*¹

Others, however, departing less widely from the tradition of Theism, hold that human souls are now, and will eternally remain, distinct "substances" in their own right. For example, Prof. Pringle - Pattison states distinctly that "every real individual must possess a *substantival* existence in the Aristotelian sense," and denies with emphasis that the being of the human soul can be simply "adjectival" to the being of God.² Similarly Dr. McTaggart, although in many places he speaks of the human "self" as a mere "differentiation" of the Absolute, yet repeatedly

¹ See *Excursus on Apotheosis*, p. 113.

² *The Idea of God*, pp. 272, 282, etc.

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and emphatically calls it an “*eternal differentiation*,” and “*a substance existing in its own right*.”

Creation regarded as Eternal.

It follows from the theory now under consideration, that God is dependent upon the universe, and that His relation to it is “*organic*” :—

- (1) That creation is an eternal fact ;
- (2) That it is not a free but a necessary act on the part of God.

Both conclusions are in fact drawn by practically all the thinkers whose views we are at present discussing.

Professor James Ward, for instance, urges : “ It seems ‘absolutely inconceivable,’ as von Hartmann puts it, that a conscious God should wait half an eternity without a good which ought to be.”¹ And Prof. Pringle - Pattison, following Ulrici, writes : “ God is known to us as Creator of the world ; we have no datum, no justification whatever, for supposing His existence out of that relation, ‘wrapped up in Himself,’ as Janet puts it, ‘entirely and in Himself an absolute.’ ”²

Does God’s Existence depend on that of the Universe ?

Writers of this school are entirely agreed that the universe is necessary to the *perfection* of God.

¹ *Realm of Ends*, p. 233.

² *O.C.*, p. 310.

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Thus we are told that God, by creating, gains “intensification of life through realisation of the life of others,”¹ and again, “there is something in the very nature of God which would remain unrevealed and unrealised, but for His relation to the world, and especially to the finite spirits He has made in His own image.”²

It seems also to be the prevailing belief of this school, though statements which are quite explicit are not very frequent, that the universe is as necessary to God’s *existence* as to His perfection.

That this is so, is certainly logically implied in such statements as “Creation is as necessary to God as God is to Creation”; and, “[God] lives and moves and has His being [in creatures].”

But there are statements which are more precise and definite.

For example, Prof. Pringle-Pattison writes: “As soon as we begin to treat God and man as two independent facts, we lose our hold upon the experienced fact, which is *the existence of the one in the other and through the other*. Most people would probably be willing to admit this *mediated existence* in the case of man, but they might feel it akin to sacrilege to make the same assertion of God. And yet, if our metaphysic is, as it professes to be, an analysis of experience, the implication is strictly reciprocal. God has no meaning to us out

¹ O.C., p. 308.

² Professor John Caird, *Fundamental Ideas of Christianity*, Vol. I, p. 162.

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of relation to our own lives or to spirits resembling ourselves in their finite grasp and infinite reach ; and, in the nature of the case, *we have absolutely no grounds for positing His existence out of that relation.*¹

The statements here made that the existence of God is a “mediated” existence, like that of man, and that God and man exist each in the other and *through* the other, can only mean, if taken literally, that God depends upon man for His existence, and consequently is not *self-existent*, as “orthodox” Theism postulates.

That this is the real meaning of the passage, is strongly confirmed by a statement which is made subsequently, that it may be affirmed, not only of man, but of God, that “he plainly receives his filling from nature, and is reduced to a bare point or empty focus, if we attempt to lift him as an independent unitary existence, out of the universal life from which he draws his spiritual sustenance.”²

Criticism of Semi-Pantheism.

The most obvious—and perhaps in the end the strongest—argument against the theory which makes the perfection and even the existence of God dependent upon creatures, is that it contradicts the plain testimony of the religious consciousness, which in a matter of this kind can rightly claim to speak with authority.

¹ *O.C.*, p. 254. The second and third set of italics are my own.

² Page 309.

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The most characteristic ingredient of all genuine religious worship is what Otto calls “creature-consciousness” or “creature-feeling.” This he defines as “the emotion of a creature abased and overwhelmed by its own nothingness in contrast to that which is supreme above all creatures”; illustrating his meaning by the words of Abraham (Gen. xviii. 27), “Behold now I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which am but *dust and ashes*.¹

He further rightly points out that this religious awe and dread, which accompanies “creature-consciousness,” “does not disappear even at the highest level of all, when the worship of God is at its purest. Its disappearance would indeed be an essential loss. The ‘shudder’ reappears in a form ennobled beyond measure, where the soul, held speechless, trembles inwardly to the furthest fibre of its being. It invades the mind mightily in Christian worship with the words ‘Holy, Holy, Holy,’ ” etc.²

The spirit of genuine worship finds classical expression in the book of Isaiah, which stresses again and again in unforgettable language the creature’s sense of absolute nothingness, as it abases itself before the infinite perfection of the self-existent Creator.

“Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, and meted out heaven with the span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales,

¹ R. Otto, *The Idea of the Holy*, p. 10.

² Page 17.

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and the hills in a balance? . . . Behold, the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance: behold, he taketh up the isles as a very little thing. . . . All nations are as nothing before him; they are counted to him less than nothing and vanity. . . . To whom, then, will ye liken me, that I may be equal, saith the Holy One?"¹

The words of Isaiah ring true to the worshipping consciousness of men of every age. The human soul, when actually engaged in adoration or worship (which is the essential "moment" of religion), knows with intuitive certainty that the dependence, of which it is so acutely conscious, is on the side of the creature alone, and is not in any sense reciprocal. Could the thought that God is dependent upon His creatures for His existence and perfection succeed in obtruding itself upon the mind of the worshipper at the actual moment of his worship, it would be vehemently rejected (as Prof. Pringle-Pattison himself recognises), as being not only contradictory of immediate experience, but as also "akin to sacrilege."

Philosophy of the "Dependence" Theory.

The "Dependence" Theory, as applied to God, runs so directly counter to the religious consciousness and to the devotional instincts of mankind, that nothing but demonstrative philosophic arguments ought to justify us in adopting

¹ Isaiah xl. 12 ff.

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it. Such arguments, however, are not forthcoming.

Advocates of the "Dependence" Theory rightly recognize that their premisses commit them to the belief that the universe, like God, had no beginning.

What they do not so clearly perceive, as a rule, is, that if God has always been (as is usually supposed) the absolutely "Perfect Being," He must have had as His eternal counterpart, not a developing or "perfectible" universe, like the existing one, but one which is changelessly perfect.

If the universe is to supply to God the perfection which He would otherwise lack, it must be perfect not merely potentially but *actually*. To be perfect only potentially is to be actually *imperfect*—it may be to an extreme degree. For example, a potential saint may be a grievous sinner, and a potential mathematician be entirely ignorant of mathematics.

It follows that the only way (on the supposition we are considering) in which God could have realized absolute perfection from eternity, would have been to have done so in dependence upon a timeless and unchanging universe—a universe which realised its multiform values, not successively in time, but simultaneously from eternity.

Cosmic Evolution.

The universe in which we have our being, however, is not thus static: it changes and develops.

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Its varied forms of good—its “values”—are realized successively in time, not simultaneously from eternity.

For example, our own solar system, which is probably representative of myriads of similar systems scattered through space, was originally in a state of extreme imperfection. It was in fact merely a vast volume of incandescent vapour, entirely unorganised, and so extremely hot, that no form of life could exist within it.

Only when the original “nebula” had condensed into the sun and its encircling planets, and the surface of the earth had cooled sufficiently to permit the existence of living organisms, did there appear upon it first plants, afterwards animals, and finally *homo sapiens*.

Now if the universe ministers to the perfection of God (as on the “Dependence” Theory it does), then obviously, in so far as He depends for His perfection upon our solar system, He has gradually advanced from a state of relative imperfection to a state of relative perfection, during the course of the evolutionary development from the nebula to man.

Moreover, this process of development is still continuing. The human race has advanced, and in backward regions is still advancing, from barbarism to civilisation, and from lower to ever higher stages of the latter. Clearly, then, every such advance involves (on the “Dependence” Theory) an advance of God Himself in the scale of perfection.

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The same result follows if we consider the relation of God to individual men. Those members of the human race which (on the theory we are considering) contribute most to the perfection of God, are obviously its good and great men—its leading statesmen, founders of religions, saints, philosophers, moral teachers, poets, historians, painters, sculptors, musicians, and scientists. These, however, perform their life-work in successive ages, from which it follows that so far as the perfection of God depends upon the world's great men, it is not a static perfection, but one that is continually augmenting.

The Evolution of God.

We reach the conclusion, therefore, that the God who is postulated by the “Dependence” Theory is only potentially and not actually a “Perfect Being.” Actually imperfect, He makes perfection His aim, and advances in and with the universe, which is organically related to Him as His necessary complement, towards its attainment.

Now it is not too much to say that the idea of a God who is only potentially, not actually perfect, involves a contradiction of the principle of Causality.

This principle requires us to assign to every effect, not only a cause, but also an *adequate* cause —*i.e.*, one which both in magnitude and excellence is at least equal to the effect to be produced (see above, p. 30).

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The evolution of the *universe* from a less to a more perfect condition, does not involve a contradiction, because (on the Theistic supposition that it is dependent upon God, who is Himself antecedently perfect) every increment in its perfection is due, not to itself, but to Him.

But the evolution of *God* involves an absolute contradiction ; because, if He gradually becomes more perfect than He was originally, every new increment of perfection which He successively realizes is *an effect without a due cause*. Of course, human beings are able to advance continually towards that finite degree of perfection or excellence which is their appointed end, because they are assisted in its attainment by the grace of God. There exists, however, no superior being able to give grace to God ; from which it obviously follows that, unless God possesses perfection necessarily and from eternity, He never can achieve it.

It may be added that, on the Dependence Theory, He is not even capable of *progressing* towards perfection in any degree ; because, were this possible, a lesser degree of perfection would be the cause of a greater, which is absurd.

The Chief Defect of the “Dependence” Theory.

Attention, however, has not yet been drawn to the most serious defect of the “Dependence” Theory, which is its extreme anthropomorphism.

The “Dependence” theory regards God, not

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as the infinitely transcendent Ruler of the universe, separated in respect of being and attributes from even the highest creatures by an immeasurable gulf, but as scarcely more than a *Primus inter pares*—a finite and imperfect deity, sharing in no inconsiderable measure the limitations of His creatures.

God, on this theory, does not differ from creatures in “kind,” but only in “degree.” Hence He can be placed in the same class with the highest of them, and it is possible for their finite perfections to be added to, or subtracted from, His.

But careful reflection will show that the being of God is upon an immeasurably higher plane than the being of creatures, and that the perfections of God infinitely transcend any perfections which are or can be exhibited by even the highest creatures.

Even “being” or “existence” cannot be affirmed in precisely the same sense of God and of creatures. The “being” of creatures is “finite,” “dependent,” and “derived,” whereas the being of God is of that unique kind called “self-existence”—in other words, it is infinite, independent, and underived.

Similarly moral goodness, as exhibited by creatures, is finite and contingent. It is limited in degree, and is separable from the nature of the creature that exhibits it. For example, a man who is a good Christian to-day, may to-morrow fall from grace, and yet remain a man.

God, however, possesses all possible moral

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perfections to an infinite degree, and (what is more) possesses them, not as mere attributes, but as an integral and inseparable element in His nature. He is not simply good, but is *Goodness itself*. He does not simply *possess* Perfection, He is Perfection.

It would be easy to show in a similar way, if space permitted, that all the other perfections which God possesses in common with creatures, are possessed by Him in a transcendent or “eminent” manner, which has no close parallel in the finite world of our ordinary experience.

It follows from these and similar considerations, that God is a “unique” Being, the only member of His class, and that His perfections and those of creatures are not commensurable, or in any strict sense comparable. To say that God’s perfections are increased by adding to them the perfections of creatures, is like saying that an infinite number can be made larger by adding to it a finite one; or that an autocratic ruler can increase his power, which is already absolute, by delegating it to a large number of officials, in place of exercising it in person.

All the limited perfections of creatures are derived from and dependent on the unlimited perfection of God, and therefore cannot increase its sum:—besides, in any case, the latter, being infinite, cannot be increased by finite additions.

We may safely conclude, therefore, that creation, whether it is an eternal process, or has a temporal beginning, is not a necessary act on the part of

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God (as the “Dependence” Theory supposes) but one which is entirely spontaneous and free. Since God is Perfection itself, He cannot increase His Perfection by creating; and since He is Beatitude itself, His Beatitude does not admit of augmentation.

And just as He was not compelled to create by any internal need or necessity, so He was not under a moral obligation of any kind to call non-existent creatures into being. That which does not yet exist can have no “rights,” and in any case the “rights” of a creature as against its Creator can only be of the most shadowy and unsubstantial kind.

Creation, we may therefore conclude, was an act, not of constraint or necessity, but of free bounty and benevolence on the part of God. It was *in accordance with* His nature, and yet *not necessitated* by it. To adopt the language of Plato in the *Timaeus*: “Let me tell, then, why the Creator created and made the universe. He was *good* . . . and being free from jealousy he desired that all things should be as like Himself as they could be. This is in the truest sense the origin of creation and of the world, as we shall do well in believing on the testimony of wise men: God desired that all things should be *good*, and nothing *bad*, so far as this was attainable” (xxix)

Here it will be wise to leave the matter. To attain to absolute demonstration in matters of this kind is hardly possible. “We walk by faith, and

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not by sight." Nevertheless, it is not too much to say, that the theory that the Creator is dependent upon His creatures, either for being or for perfection, receives as little support from the principles of a sound philosophy, as from the devotional instincts and religious consciousness of mankind.

EXCURSUS ON APOTHEOSIS

The Pantheistic and Semipantheistic thought of the ancient world did not restrict the attribute of "divinity" to a single transcendent Being, as did the religion of Israel, but regarded it as capable of degrees, and as being in fact shared in unequal measure by a vast hierarchy of deified men, nature spirits, planets and other heavenly bodies, and Chthonian and Olympian deities.

The ancient Græco-Roman world believed very generally in the "apotheosis," or deification after death, of heroes, sages, benefactors of mankind, and wise rulers. Certain of the mystery cults went further, and taught that even ordinary human beings were able to attain to divinity after death as a result of "initiation."

Both the ancient Jews and the primitive Christians regarded the practice of worshipping deified mortals with unmitigated horror; but, in spite of this, attempts were made (as was only natural) to bring Christianity into harmony with Pagan ideas, by representing Jesus of Nazareth as a renowned hero and sage, who as a reward for

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virtue, and for signal services to the human race, had been exalted after death (like Hercules, Æsculapius, and Augustus) to divine rank as "Son of God." Theodotus of Byzantium, Artemon, and Paul of Samosata are the best known advocates of views of this nature.

In the present work we are concerned entirely with the philosophical, and not at all with the ecclesiastical status of the doctrine of Apotheosis. But, since we accept the theory of Monotheism as the only theological theory which is philosophically defensible, we are compelled to reject the theory of deification for the following reasons:—

(1) It involves unlimited polytheism. If one virtuous human being can be exalted to divinity as a reward of virtue, and may be lawfully adored, so also may others, and the way is opened to the adoption of the entire system of Pagan creature-worship.

(2) The doctrine of Apotheosis regards God as imperfect in Himself, and as gradually advancing towards perfection by assuming into His substance multitudes of finite beings upon whom His perfection is dependent.

(3) It denies God's eternity, for all the creatures assumed into His Substance had a beginning; hence part of His Substance is eternal, and part is not.

(4) Since the creatures assumed into God are only parts and not the whole of Him, it follows

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that the substance of God is composed of parts, and is divisible, like matter, which involves a denial of its spirituality.

Recent attempts to revive the doctrine of Apotheosis, or (as it is frequently called) "Adoptionism," cannot be regarded very seriously. "Adoptionism," writes Dr Kirsopp Lake, who cannot be suspected of any undue leanings towards tradition, "seems to me to have no part or lot in any intelligent modern theology, though it is unfortunately often promulgated, especially in pulpits which are regarded as liberal. We cannot believe that at any time a human being, in consequence of his virtue, become God, which he was not before. No doctrine of Christology, and no doctrine of salvation which is Adoptionist in essence, can come to terms with modern thought" (*Landmarks*, p. 131).

To explain Christ's divinity in terms of "Adoptionism" is in effect to make the basis of the Christian religion, not the Redemptive Incarnation of God, but the deification (real or imaginary) of a first century Galilean Jew (see further the appended note in Dr A. E. J. Rawlinson's *Bampton Lectures*, and my own much fuller discussion in *Creeds or no Creeds?*).

APPENDIX

MODERN PSYCHOLOGY AND THE CHRISTIAN FAITH

Being "The Pride Sermon," preached before the University of Oxford on Sunday, November 22, 1925.

"We know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge puffeth up, but love edifieth."—1 Cor. viii. 1.

The Pride of Gnosticism.

The earliest form of heresy of which we have any accurate information was one which attached undue importance to knowledge, and encouraged in its adherents (who usually formed themselves into inner circles of adepts or initiates) unpleasing forms of intellectual pride. Already in the Pastoral Epistles (if these are really apostolic, as seems on the whole to be probable) St Paul found himself compelled to denounce in energetic language "the profane babblings of the knowledge falsely so called" of incipient Gnosticism, a pseudo-intellectual movement with marked affinities with such present-day developments as Christian Science, New Thought, and Theosophy. Almost universally the ancient Gnostics taught the doctrine of salvation by knowledge, denied or depreciated salvation by faith, arrogated to them-

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selves the exclusive right to the title “pneumatic” or “spiritual,” looked down upon ordinary Christians as “psychical” or “carnal,” and boomed with all the audacity and some of the art of the modern sensational advertiser their own particular brand of “gnosis” as the one and only panacea for all spiritual maladies in this world, and the infallible guarantee of a blessed immortality in the next.

Humility of Socrates and Plato.

The shallow pretentiousness of Gnosticism, its charlatanism, and its disposition to dabble in the occult, were alien from the true spirit of ancient philosophy. Socrates, the father of the leading philosophic schools of Greece, so far from priding himself upon his knowledge, considered that his sole title to be considered wise was his profound conviction of his universal ignorance. His greatest follower, Plato, showed his modesty as well as his gratitude by attributing practically the whole of his own highly original philosophical system to his revered teacher, whom he represented in his immortal *Dialogues* as at once the ideal philosopher and the perfectly wise and virtuous man.

The Heathen View of Pride.

Yet it would be a mistake to suppose that humility in its full Christian sense—or even the bare conception of it—can be discerned anywhere in the ancient world, even among philosophers. Doubtless, Lightfoot exaggerated (an unusual

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fault with him) when he declared uncompromisingly that the ancients regarded humility as a vice rather than a virtue ; but there is enough truth in his overstatement to render it plausible. Aristotle does, it is true, admit (in a single passage) that the average man whose moral attainments are not noteworthy ought to be humble ; but this does not cancel his emphatic assertion, several times repeated in various forms, that “ highmindedness ” seems to be “ the crowning grace of the virtues.”

Intellectual Pride of Philosophers.

Even Plato, whose humility and self-suppression are so evident in his *Dialogues*, shows a much less pleasing side of his character in the more intimate and self-revealing *Epistles*. I wish it were to-day possible to hold (as it still was a few years ago) that the disputed Platonic *Epistles*, which were rejected by practically every nineteenth century critic except Grote, which Jowett refused to translate as “ unworthy of Plato,” which Lobeck censured as “ worthy of a tyrant and most unworthy of a philosopher,” and which the late Mr Herbert Richards characterised as displaying “ pompous pride, . . . and at least as much personal vanity . . . as solicitude for philosophy,” are spurious. But unfortunately for Plato’s personal reputation, the current of recent critical opinion runs so strongly in the direction of rehabilitating them, that I fear we shall have to

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acquiesce in the judgment of Professor A. E. Taylor [lately reiterated in his *Plato*, p. 15] that very probably the whole of them except the first, including even the pompous so-called “interpolation” in the seventh, proceeds from his pen. Plato, we may remind ourselves, was by no means the only great philosopher who has succumbed to a similar temptation. For example, it is said that Kant in his old age, when his fame was firmly established, began to imagine that his “critical” philosophy would prove permanent and final ; and every student of Hegel will readily recall passages which, taken at their face-value, seem to imply that “the Absolute,” or God, for the first time succeeded in expressing—or even in comprehending—Himself in and through the intricacies of the Hegelian metaphysical system.

Pride of Science.

In our own day and generation, however, it is far more often the natural scientists, than either the philosophers or the theologians, who have unduly magnified their office and claimed undue ascendancy for their own particular discipline.

No sooner had “natural philosophy” (natural “science” as we now call it) detached itself from the parent stem of philosophy as a whole, than it developed a regrettable tendency to regard itself as the whole of science ; to deprecate metaphysical and theological inquiry as useless and misleading ; to exalt mathematics and physics to the position

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of the premier sciences ; to ignore the existence in the universe of quality, value, and purpose ; to express biological facts in terms of physics and chemistry ; and, as a final step towards a consistently mechanical view of the universe, to reduce psychology—even human psychology—to physiology and brain-physics.

Materialistic Psychology.

This naturalistic and anti-theological tendency may already be seen quite clearly in David Hartley, the founder of the “Association” school of psychology, who, though not actually a materialist, is the true father both of the more refined semimaterialism, and of the cruder and more thorough-going materialism, of the nineteenth century. During the latter part of this period flourished such materialistic monstrosities as the “epiphenomenalism” of Huxley, the “conscious automaton” theory of Clifford, and the more subtle, but not really more rational, theory of psychophysical parallelism, which probably received its quietus a few years ago in Dr. McDougall’s *Body and Mind*, but whose disconsolate ghost still walks and finds expression in the views of the more extreme “Behaviourists” who would reduce psychology to the mere study of bodily “behaviour.”

The New Psychology.

At the present moment, the chief danger to religion and Christian standards of morality

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proceeds, not from the dogmatism of physical science (whose representatives now show a laudable desire to acknowledge its limited, "relative," and "symbolic" character) but rather from the extravagant claims to universal authority put forward by certain representatives of "the new psychology."

Early in the present century, the science of psychology definitely detached itself from physiology and neurology (with which during the last century it was closely connected and often confused), claimed for itself a section of its own at meetings of the British Association, and took rank in public estimation as a distinct fundamental science in its own right. This change was generally welcomed by theologians and philosophers, because it seemed to be a spontaneous admission on the part of natural science itself, that mental facts are incommensurable with physical facts, that the human *psyche* or soul is not a mere "phosphorescence," or "shadow," or "epiphenomenon," which accompanies (for no explainable or useful reason) the mechanical functioning of the brain and nervous system, but is something supremely important and valuable in the economy of the universe. As we shall presently have to criticize Freud somewhat unfavourably, it is only fair here to state that even his rigidly deterministic system regards the soul as something distinct from the body which it animates, and assumes that psychical energy (or libido) is something radically different from physical energy.

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Unfortunately, however, the newly emancipated science of psychology shows an undesirable tendency (in some at least of its representatives) to regard itself as the universal science, and to claim supremacy over all human life and knowledge. As the Bishop of Southwark and Dr Matthews rightly complain in the recently-published volume of essays, *Psychology and the Church* : “At the present moment psychology is very ready to claim all departments of knowledge as its own, and to express with no uncertain voice its conclusions on matters of education, medicine, morals, and theology. It is from psychology that the most dangerous attacks are now made on Christian faith and conduct. The general tendency of many psychological writers is to regard the objects of religious faith simply as projections of the human mind without any corresponding realities ; to treat religion as purely subjective ; and to refuse any objective reality to the Christian conception of God and the spiritual world. . . . Psychology is often inclined to imagine that it holds the key to every problem of thought and conduct. The attitude of some psychologists to sin is subversive of all that has been taught by Christian moralists ; the danger which they attach to the repression of the instincts is made by them the ground for regarding as natural acts of sexual immorality, and of justifying the immediate gratification of impulses which the Christian has always taught should be controlled and disciplined.” (Chap. X.)

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Ethics of the Psychoanalysts.

I do not think that any student of recent psychoanalytical literature will regard this language as uncharitable or exaggerated. It would undoubtedly be unjust to attribute to Freud himself, whose contributions to psychotherapeutic and psychological theory are of outstanding importance, all the vagaries of the least cautious and most enthusiastic of his followers ; but the fact remains that the attitude of even the master himself towards what he contemptuously calls the “conventional” (*i.e.*, the Christian) morality is far from satisfactory. “We have found it impossible,” he writes, “to give our support to conventional sexual morality, or to approve highly of the means by which society attempts to arrange the practical problems of sexuality in life. We can demonstrate with ease that what the world calls its code of morals demands more sacrifices than it is worth, and that its behaviour is neither dictated by honesty nor instituted with wisdom.” (*Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*, E.T., page 362.)

Apart altogether from this, the rigid determinism of the Freudian system, the dominating (and indeed exclusive) rôle which it assigns to irrational instinct, its depreciation of reason, and its confident denial that the human intellect possesses any of that directing and controlling power over the passions which philosophy as well as religion has always hitherto assigned to it, have the effect

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(even in those who accept the Freudian theories with considerable reservations) of undermining the vigour of the will, discouraging energetic resistance to temptation, and by consequence impeding healthy moral development.

What is Psychology?

We have now to examine the validity of the claim put forward by certain psychologists to dominate, in the name of their science, the entire field of knowledge—even of religious knowledge. And first let us ask, What precisely is psychology ; what is its subject-matter ; what are its methods ; and what (as arising from these) are its limitations ?

In tradition, psychology has usually been considered rather as a philosophical than as a purely natural science. In other words, while from one point of view it has been considered a natural science, because some at least of its results are clearly based upon observation and experiment, from another point of view it has been treated as a branch of philosophy, because until recently psychologists have considered it as their duty not to confine themselves to the subjective or phenomenal point of view, but to seek objective truth, and in particular to investigate with all possible thoroughness such ultimate and all-important questions as the freedom of the will, the metaphysical nature of the soul, its relation to the universe and to God, and its final destiny. Understood in this sense, psychology had and has a

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real right to speak with considerable authority upon moral and religious questions.

Limitations of Modern Psychology.

But the psychology with which we have to deal to-day, and in whose name these far-reaching claims are made, is not a branch of philosophy. It is a purely empirical or natural science, *and nothing else*. Its subject-matter, like that of the other sciences, is a limited one, and of course the area within which it is entitled to speak with authority is limited by its subject-matter. Various definitions of modern psychology have recently been given (some very misleading and inadequate), nor is it possible to say that any existing definition is quite satisfactory ; but we shall probably not be far from the truth if (following the general consensus of authorities) we define its subject-matter as (1) the phenomena of *consciousness*, (2) the phenomena of *subconsciousness*, and (3) *bodily behaviour*, which is studied mainly as throwing light upon the mental processes which it expresses. Within the limits imposed by its subject-matter, the conclusions of psychology are, of course, valid ; but beyond these limits they are liable to mislead. The words of the late Dr Rashdall upon this subject are not too strong : “ I would venture to add a word of caution against the tendency fashionable in many quarters to talk of basing religious belief upon Psychology. The business of Psychology is to tell us what actually goes on in

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the human mind. It cannot tell us whether the beliefs which are found there are true or false. An erroneous belief is as much a psychological fact as a true one. . . . The idea of a Religion which is merely based upon Psychology, and involves nothing else, is a delusion. All the great religions of the world have been, among other things, metaphysical systems." (*Philosophy and Religion*, pages 111 and 116.) Very similar language is used by Dr. William Brown, whose right to speak in the name of modern psychology no one in this University is likely to dispute. "Just as psychology as such cannot do justice to the validity of knowledge, psychology cannot do justice to the validity of religion. . . . At every step in our [religious] argument we shall find it necessary to supplement psychology with philosophy. . . . Directly we assume that the individual [man] is in touch with an existence outside him, we are passing beyond psychology. All that psychology does is to describe as accurately and as fully as possible what goes on in his mind." (*Science, Religion, and Reality*, pages 308 and 310.)

Subjective Standpoint of Psychology.

It thus follows from the very nature of modern psychology that it is strictly limited to the subjective standpoint, and is unable to attain to objective truth. Moreover, it can only describe what is, and cannot possibly prescribe what ought to be ; which in itself is an insuperable barrier to

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its interfering authoritatively in ethics. Psychology has a perfect right to investigate how the human mind does in fact think, believe, feel, and will ; but it cannot prescribe how it ought to do these things. As in the dark all cows are black, so to psychology truth and error, right and wrong methods of reasoning, and right and wrong moral decisions, assume a neutral hue, being simply psychological facts, and nothing else.

It follows from these considerations that the much advertised “ psychological theology,” which we are asked to substitute for the effete metaphysical theology of the Church and of philosophic tradition, is the study, not of God, but of man’s religious instincts, emotions, beliefs, conduct, and methods of worship. Similarly, psychological ethics is the study, not of the objective Moral Law, which, in the opinion of most philosophers and all Christian theologians, binds all rational natures with an absolute obligation, but of man’s subjective moral instincts, impulses, emotions, tendencies, judgments, beliefs, and acts. Psychological logic is a description of how men do in fact reason, even when they reason wrong ; not of how they ought to reason. Psychological æsthetics describes what men’s æsthetic judgments actually are ; not what they ought to be.

In thus speaking, I am far from wishing to assert that psychology has no light whatever to throw upon the great problems of metaphysics, theology, and ethics. All that I mean is, that it has no right to pronounce authoritatively upon them.

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Psychologists may and ought to make contributions to other sciences. It is all to the good when psychologists, either spontaneously or by request, lay before metaphysicians, theologians, and moral philosophers, any well-established results of their own branch of inquiry which seem to them relevant and useful. But they have no right to do more than this. One science is not entitled to dictate methods and results to another. Each particular discipline is autonomous within its own sphere, and must be allowed to reach its own conclusions in its own way.

“Psychology without a Soul.”

The methods of modern psychology, though somewhat bewildering to the plain man, are perfectly legitimate within its own sphere. Even its strange paradoxes are capable of rational defence. For example, modern psychology is frequently spoken of as “psychology without a soul.” This description seems a contradiction in terms to the plain man, is an offence to the average Christian believer, and is regarded by many metaphysicians, and even by some psychologists, as something very like nonsense. But to the majority of psychologists of the new school it seems obviously correct, because in their view modern psychology, being a purely natural science, has nothing to do with the soul as a metaphysical entity, but must treat it as a phenomenon or group of functions.

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Even more puzzling to the outsider is the usual psychological description of God as a “mental projection.” This sounds like atheism ; but the whole sting of the apparent negativity is removed, if we reflect that for modern psychology not only God, but also all objective realities (*e.g.*, other minds and physical objects) are equally “mental projections.” Modern psychology, being limited to the subjective standpoint, is bound to treat all external things as projections ; but this need not imply that they are nothing else.

The truth is, that the new psychology is precluded by its very nature from affirming the objective existence of anything whatever. Modern psychologists are, of course, not precluded from drawing attention to the apparent “objective reference” of all sensation—in fact they usually do so. They are also entitled to insist upon what, when once pointed out, seems obvious, *viz.*, that our belief in the objective existence of matter and of other persons is an instinct rather than an inference. But they cannot go further and affirm positively—at least as psychologists—the validity of this belief. The reality of the external world is a question for metaphysics, not psychology.

Psychology and Religion.

In a similar way, psychologists have a perfect right to point out, as Professor Cook Wilson was fond of doing, and as Professor Otto has done more recently in his brilliant work *Das Heilige*, that the

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specifically religious emotions of the human soul, e.g., "awe," "reverence," and "creature-feeling," are normally accompanied by a vague yet quite real awareness of what seems to be an objective and transcendent Mystery (*mysterium tremendum augustum fascinans* is Otto's description of it); but whether this Mystery objectively exists, and whether, if it does, anything more definite can be known about it, is a problem for theology and metaphysics, not for psychology.

Psychology and the Incarnation.

We have now in the last place to consider what prospect there is of applying the principles of modern psychology with any success to the solution of current theological problems; and we will take as a crucial example the problem of the Incarnation.

Without doubt there has been for some time past an insistent demand, coming from several quarters, not all of them definitely hostile to orthodoxy, that the Church should revise its faith in the Incarnation, which at present is defined in exclusively metaphysical terms (and those of ancient not modern philosophy), and restate it in the better understood and more scientific categories and terminology of modern psychology. In particular, it is urged that the term "of one substance" (*homoousion*) approved at Nicæa should be dropped, and the expression "of one will" substituted, partly because it is simpler, but

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chiefly because “modern psychology,” we are told, “knows nothing of substance.” Still more insistently, it is demanded that the doctrine of the “Two Natures” of Christ, defined at Chalcedon, and its corollary that of the Two Wills, defined by the Sixth Council, should be discarded in favour of some modern form (we are not usually told which) of the “One Nature” theory.

A recent writer, who has more than once occupied this pulpit, thus expresses what he regards as the present position: “The rapid advance of the science of psychology has helped to force the [Christological] problem to the front, and many feel that the definition of Christ’s Person framed in A.D. 451 by the Council of Chalcedon requires revision. . . . If there is one thing which modern psychology insists on more than another it is that personality is an organic unity. A normally constituted person is an organic whole with a single centre of consciousness and a single will . . . [Jesus] was an individual person like ourselves, possessed of a single volitional centre and a single consciousness, a true human being who lived a genuine human life. Jesus was a human being like ourselves.”

Time does not permit any adequate discussion of the main Christological problem; nevertheless, something useful may be said concerning the very serious fallacy involved in the proposed psychological method of approach.

The laws of modern psychology are primarily the laws of the mentality of “the normal human

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adult," these being ascertained as far as possible by actual observation and experiment. Consequently, though they apply without exception to every member of the class "normal human adult," they do not apply strictly to anything else.

It follows that before we can venture to apply the laws of psychology to the special case of Jesus of Nazareth, we must make up our minds whether His personality belongs to the class "normal human adult," or whether, while being truly human, it also transcends humanity, and is accordingly *sui generis* or "unique." It is a recognized principle of science that scientific laws apply only to objects which are accurately known and classed; not to unique objects. Laws applicable to unique objects must be ascertained from the actual study of those objects, not from any of the laws or principles already known to science.

Consequently, if Jesus of Nazareth really was what the majority of Christians believe Him to have been, viz., a "unique object," then obviously the laws of a purely human psychology will not describe Him without remainder. If we would ascertain what was the actual nature of His personality and consciousness, we must turn, not to psychology, but to the Gospels.

If we study the vivid and at times intimate description of the "Jesus of History" given in the earliest Gospel, and assume, as I am glad to see Dr Major does in his valuable little book *Reminiscences of Jesus by an Eyewitness*, that St

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Mark's narrative, without being infallible, is reasonably authentic, we shall certainly discover many psychological data which do not easily square with the theory either that He was simply "a normal human adult" or that He was only a prophet or religious genius. What "normal human adult," or prophet either, ever uttered such an amazing declaration as "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away" (Mark xiii. 31); or, while admitting that He knew not the day or the hour of the Judgment to come, yet claimed for Himself a dignity and degree of knowledge not merely superhuman but even superangelic (xiii. 32); or affirmed that He was destined to sit on the throne of the universe as Judge of all (xiii. 26-27; xiv. 62); or rebuked the raging winds and stormy sea with the words "Peace be still" (literally "be muzzled"), obviously implying that He was the rightful Lord of nature, and the Supreme Power upholding it—in other words, "the Logos," as later theology came to express it?

It is, of course, possible to expurgate St Mark's Gospel by cancelling these and similar passages (though this would almost mean the rewriting of it); but if we allow them to remain, and if we further agree with Dr Major that we have here the genuine reminiscences of St Peter, then we can hardly avoid the conclusion, that the mode of the consciousness of Jesus, even during His earthly ministry, was not simply human, but was also superhuman and divine, and that, whether we

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regard His knowledge of His divine nature as mediated through His manhood or not.

The Two Natures.

It is precisely this dual aspect of the mysterious personality of Jesus, that the doctrine of the "Two Natures" and the "Two Wills" was devised to express. It does not claim immunity from criticism, or to be satisfactory in every respect. Intelligent Christian believers have no wish to hold any doctrines which cannot be rationally defended ; and if this doctrine is really irrational, then the sooner it is abandoned the better. But those who still hold it—as I do myself—have a perfect right to insist that the arguments brought against it shall be metaphysical and theological, not psychological. It is not an argument against this doctrine, but rather one in its favour, that it cannot be expressed in terms of modern non-metaphysical psychology. Nor are there lacking strong positive arguments in its favour, as, for example, that it states the mystery without explaining it (a very great advantage) ; and that it guards definitely against all possible pantheistic confusion between Godhead and manhood (which no proposed modern substitute effectively does) ; further, that its opponents are not agreed as to what ought to be substituted for it ; and (most important of all) that the objections against all the proposed substitutes are far stronger than those against the doctrine itself. The formula of

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Chalcedon is not satisfactory in every respect (what human formulation of Divine truth ever is ?) ; but it successfully holds the field at present against all competitors ; nor is there within sight any alternative formula which could conceivably replace it.

The Unitarian Issue.

One last word. The adoption of the principle that the personality of Jesus is to be interpreted and explained in terms of modern psychology, is likely to carry its advocates—or at least its English advocates—very much further than they are at present prepared to go. On the Continent, as every serious student of theology knows, the doctrine of the Two Natures has been rejected for almost two generations by practically every one who has a right to speak in the name of Liberal Protestantism ; and this rejection has in almost all cases been accompanied by a rejection of the doctrine of the Incarnation in anything but a nominal sense. The Liberal Protestant leaders of Germany have uniformly insisted, with what seems to me unanswerable logic, that if the laws of modern psychology are to be applied to the case of Jesus at all, they must be applied with rigour. According to these laws, a human individual can have only a single nature—namely, human nature. If we apply this principle to the case of Jesus, it follows logically that He also has only a single nature, and that this nature must be entirely and

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exclusively human. If He is to be called the Son of God at all, it can only be in the same sense in which all men are, or are capable of becoming, sons of God. All idea of a unique and redemptive Incarnation of God is excluded.

This logical and necessary result of the One Nature theory seems to me a thoroughly good reason why Unitarians should welcome it ; but surely it is an equally good reason why believing Christians, who have experienced in their own souls Christ's divine power to redeem and save, should reject it with decision.

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